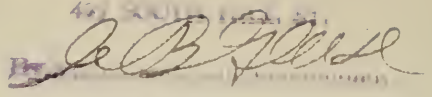
Told in the Hills

Marah Ellis Ryan



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MARAH ELLIS RYAN.

Told in the Hills

A Novel

by Marah Ellis Ryan

Chicago and New York
Rand, McNally & Company

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IN ALL REVERENCE—

IN ALL GRATITUDE

TO THE FRIENDS GRANTED ME

BY

THE WEST.

FAYETTE SPRINGS, PENN.
October 14, 1890.

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KOPA MESIKA—

Nika sikhs klaksta kumtucks—
Klaksta yakwa mamook clahan,
Nika mahsie—mahsie kwanesum.

M. E. R

TOLD IN THE HILLS.

Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox, or his sheep, go astray. * * * Thou shalt bring it unto thine own house, and it shall be with thee until thy brother seek after it, and thou shalt restore it to him again. * * * * * * * * And with all lost things of thy brother's which he hath lost, and thou hast found, shalt thou do likewise. * * * * * * * * * * * * * * In any case thou shalt deliver him the pledge again when the sun goeth down.—*Deuteronomy.*

PART FIRST.

THE PLEDGE.

"The only one of the name who is not a gentleman;" those words were repeated over and over by a young fellow who walked, one autumn morning, under the shade of old trees and along a street of aristocratic houses in old New Orleans.

He would have been handsome had it not been for the absolutely wicked expression of his face as he muttered to himself while he walked. He looked about twenty-five—dark and tall—so tall as to be a noticeable man among many men, and so well-proportioned, and so confidently careless in movement as not to be ungainly—the confidence of strength.

Some negroes whom he passed turned to look after him, even the whites he met eyed him seriously. He

looked like a man off a sleepless journey, his eyes were bloodshot, his face haggard, and over all was that malignant expression of devilment.

He stopped at a house set back from the street, and half-smothered in the shade of the trees and great creeping vines that flung out long arms from the stone walls. There was a stately magnificence about its grand entrance, and its massive proportions—it showed so plainly the habitation of wealth. Evidently the ill-natured looking individual was not a frequent visitor there, for he examined it, and the numbers about with some indecision; then his eyes fell on the horse-block, in the stone of which a name was carved. A muttered something, which was not a blessing, issued from his lips as he read it, but with indecision at an end he strode up the walk to the house. A question was asked and answered by the dubious-looking darkey at the door, a message sent somewhere to the upper regions, and then the darkey, looking no less puzzled, requested the gentleman to follow him to the "Young Massa's" study. The gentleman did so, noting with those wicked side glances of his the magnificence of the surroundings, and stopping short before a picture of a brunette, willowy girl that rested on an easel. The face was lovely enough to win praise from any man, but an expression, strangely akin to that bestowed on the carven name outside, escaped him. Through the lattice of the window the laughter of woman came to him—as fresh and cheery as the light of the young sun, and bits of broken sentences also—words of banter and retort.

"Ah, but he is beautiful—your husband!" sighed a girlish voice with the accent of France; "so impressibly charming! And so young. You two children!"

Some gay remonstrance against childishness was returned, and then the first voice went on:

"And the love all of one quick meeting, and one quick, grand passion that only the priest could bring cure for? And how shy you were, and how secret—was it not delightful? Another Juliet and her Romeo. Only it is well your papa is not so ill-pleased."

"Why should he be? My family is no better than my husband's—only some richer; but we never thought of that—we two. I thought of his beautiful changeable eyes, and he thought of my black ones, and—well, I came home to papa a wife, and my husband said only, 'I love her,' when we were blamed for the haste and the secrecy, and papa was won—as I think every one is, by his charming boyishness; but," with a little laugh, "he is not a boy."

"Though he is younger than yourself?"

"Well, what then? I am twenty-three. You see we are quite an old couple, for he is almost within a year of being as old. Come; my lord has not yet come down. I have time to show you the roses. I am sure they are the kind you want."

Their chatter and gaiety grew fainter as they walked away from the window, and their light chat added no light to the visitor's face. He paced up and down the room with the eager restlessness of some caged thing. A step sounded outside that brought him to a halt—a step and a mellow voice with the sweetness of youth in it. Then the door opened and a tall form entered swiftly, and quick words of welcome and of surprise came from him as he held out his hand heartily.

But it was not taken. The visitor stuck his hands in the pockets of his coat, and surveyed with a good deal of contempt his host.

Yet he was a fine, manly-looking fellow, almost as tall as his visitor, and fairer in coloring. His hair was a warmer brown, while the other man's was black. His eyes were frank and open, while the other's were scowling and contracted. They looked like allegorical types of light and darkness as they stood there, yet something of the breadth of forehead and form of the nose gave a suggestion of likeness to their faces, and the younger one clouded indignantly as he drew back his offered hand.

"Why, look here, old fellow, what's up?" he asked hastily, and then the indignation fled before some warmer feeling, and he went forward impulsively, laying his hand on the other's arm.

"Just drop that," scowled his visitor. "I didn't come here for that sort of thing, but for business—yes—you can bet your money on that!"

His host laughed and dropped into a chair.

"Well, you don't look as if you come on a pleasure trip," he agreed, "and I think you might look a little more agreeable, considering the occasion and—and—everything. I thought father would come down sure, when I wrote I was married, but I didn't expect to see anyone come in this sort of a temper. What is it? Has your three-year-old come in last in the fall race, or have you lost money on some other fellow's stock, and what the mischief do you mean by sulking at me?"

"It ain't the three-year-old, and it ain't money lost," and the dark eyes were watching every feature of the frank young face; "the business I've come on is—you."

"Look here," and the young fellow straightened up with the conviction that he had struck the question, "is it because of my—marriage?"

"Rather." Still those watchful eyes never changed.

"Well," and the fair face flushed a little, "I suppose it wasn't just the correct thing; but you're not exactly the preacher for correct deportment, are you?" and the words, though ironical, were accompanied by such a bright smile that no offense could be taken from them. "But I'll tell you how it happened. Sit down. I would have sent word before, if I'd suspected it myself, but I didn't. Now don't look so glum, old fellow. I never imagined you would care. You see we were invited to make up a yacht party and go to Key West. We never had seen each other until the trip, and—well, we made up for the time we had lost in the rest of our lives; though I honestly did not think of getting married—any more than you would. And then, all at once, what little brains I had were upset. It began in jest, one evening in Key West, and the finale of it was that before we went to sleep that night we were married. No one knew it until we got back to New Orleans, and then I wrote home at once. Now, I'm ready for objections."

"When you left home you were to be back in two months—it is four now. Why didn't you come?"

"Well, you know I was offered the position of assistant here to Doctor Grenier; that was too good to let go."

"Exactly; but you could have got off, I reckon, to have spent your devoted father's birthday at home—if you wanted to."

"He was your father first," was the good-humored retort.

"Why didn't you come home?"

There was a hesitation in the younger face. For the first time he looked ill at ease.

"I don't know why I should give you any reason except that I did not want to," he returned, and then he arose, walking back and forth a couple of times across the room and stopping at a window, with his back to his visitor. "But I will," he added impulsively. "I stayed away on account of—Annie."

The dark eyes fairly blazed at the name.

"Yes?"

"I—I was a fool when I was home last spring," continued the young fellow, still with his face to the window. "I had never realized before that she had grown up or that she was prettier than anyone I knew, until you warned me about it—you remember?"

"I reckon I do," was the grim reply.

"Well, I tried to be sensible. I did try," he protested, though no contradiction was made. "And after I left I concluded I had better stay away until—well, until we were both a little older and more level-headed."

"It's a pity you didn't reach that idea before you left," said the other significantly.

"What!"

"And before you turned back for that picture you had forgotten."

"What do you mean?" and for the first time a sort of terror shone in his face—a dread of the dark eyes that were watching him so cruelly. "Tell me what it is you mean, brother."

"You can just drop that word," was the cold remark. "I haven't any relatives to my knowledge. Your father told me this morning I was the only one of the name who was not a gentleman. I reckon I'll get along without either father or brother for the rest of my life. The thing I came here to see about is the

homestead. It is yours and mine—or will be some day. What do you intend doing with your share?"

"Well, I'm not ready to make my will yet," said the other, still looking uneasy as he waited further explanations.

"I rather think you'll change your mind about that, and fix it right here, and now. To-day I want you to transfer every acre of your share to Annie."

"What?"

"To insure her the home you promised your mother she should always have."

"But look here—"

"To insure it for her and—her child."

The face at the window was no longer only startled, it was white as death.

"Good God! You don't mean that!" he gasped. "It is not true. It can't be true!"

"You contemptible cur! You damnable liar!" muttered the other through his teeth. "You sit there like the whelp that you are, telling me of this woman you have married, with not a thought of that girl up in Kentucky that you had a right to marry. Shooting you wouldn't do her any good, or I wouldn't leave the work undone. Now I reckon you'll make the transfer."

The other had sat down helplessly, with his head in his hands.

"I can't believe it—I can't believe it," he repeated heavily. "Why—why did she not write to me?"

"It wasn't an easy thing to write, I reckon," said the other bitterly, "and she waited for you to come back. She did send one letter, but you were out on the water with your fine friends, and it was returned. The next we heard was the marriage. Word got there two days ago, and then—she told me."

"You!" and he really looked unsympathetic enough to exempt him from being chosen as confidant of heart secrets.

"Yes; and she shan't be sorry for it if I can help it. What about that transfer?"

"I'll make it;" and the younger man rose to his feet again with eyes in which tears shone. "I'll do anything under God's heaven for her! I've never got rid of the sight of her face. It—it hoodooed me. I couldn't get rid of it!—or remorse. I thought it best to stay away, we were so young to marry, and there was my profession to work for yet; and then on top of all my sensible plans there came that invitation on the yacht—and so you know the whole story; and now—what will become of her?"

"You fix that transfer, and I'll look after her."

"You! I don't deserve this of you, and—"

"No; I don't reckon you do," returned the other, tersely; "and when you—damn your conceit!—catch me doing that or anything else on your account, just let me know. It isn't for either one of you, for that matter. It's because I promised."

The younger dropped his arms and head on the table.

"You promised!" he groaned. "I—I promised as well as you, and mother believed me—trusted me, and, now—oh, mother! mother!"

His remorseful emotion did not stir the least sympathy in his listener, only a chilly unconcern as to his feelings in the matter.

"Yes, you cried just about that way when you made the promise," he remarked indifferently. "It was wasted time and breath then, and I reckon it's the same thing now. You can put in the rest of your life in the

wailing and gnashing of teeth business if you want to —you might get the woman you married to help you, if you tell her what she has for a husband. But just now there are other things to attend to. I am leaving this part of the country in less than six hours, and this thing must be settled first. I want your promise to transfer to Annie all interest you have in the homestead during your lifetime, and leave it to her by will in case the world is lucky enough to get rid of you."

"I promise."

His head was still on the table; he did not look up or resent in any way the taunts thrown at him. He seemed utterly crushed by the revelations he had listened to.

"And another thing I want settled is, that you are never again to put foot on that place or in that house, or allow the woman you married to go there, that you will neither write to Annie nor try to see her."

"But there might be circumstances—"

"There are no circumstances that will keep me from shooting you like the dog you are, if you don't make that promise, and keep it," said the other deliberately. "I don't intend to trust to your word. But you'll never find me too far out of the world to get back here if you make it necessary for me to come. And the promise I expect is that you'll never set foot on the old place again without my consent—" and the phrase was too ironical to have much room for hope.

"I promise. I tell you I'll do anything to make amends," he moaned miserably.

"Your whole worthless life wouldn't do that!" was the bitter retort. "Now, there is one thing more I want understood," and his face became more set and

hardened; "Annie and her child are to live in the house that should be theirs by right, and they are to live there respected—do you hear? That man you call father has about as much heart in him as a sponge. He would turn her out of the house if he knew the truth, and in this transfer of yours he is to know nothing of the reason—understand that. He is quite ready to think it prompted by your generous, affectionate heart, and the more he thinks that, the better it will be for Annie. You will have a chance to pose for the rest of your life as one of the most honorable of men, and the most loyal to a dead mother's trust," and a sound that would have been a laugh but for its bitterness broke from him as he walked to the door; "that will suit you, I reckon. One more lie doesn't matter, and the thing I expect you to do is make that transfer to-day and send it to Annie with a letter that anyone could read, and be none the wiser—the only letter you're to ever write her. You have betrayed that trust; its mine now."

"And you'll be worth it," burst out the other heartbrokenly; "worth a dozen times over more than I ever could be if I tried my best. You'll take good care of her, and—and—good God! If I could only speak to her once!"

"If you do, I'll know it, and I'll kill you!" said the man at the door.

He was about to walk out when the other arose bewilderedly.

"Wait," he said, and his livid face was convulsed pitifully. He was so little more than a boy. "This what you have told me has muddled my head. I can't think. I know the promises, and I'll keep them. If shooting myself would help her, I'd do that; but you

say you are leaving the country, and Annie is to live on at the old place, and—and yet be respected? I can't understand how, with—under the—the circumstances. I—"

"No, I don't reckon you can," scowled the other, altogether unmoved by the despairing eyes and broken, remorseful words. "It isn't natural that you should understand a man, or how a man feels; but Annie's name shall be one you had a right to give her four months ago—"

"What are you saying?" broke in the other with feverish intensity; "tell me! tell me what it is you mean!"

"I mean that she shan't be cheated out of a name for herself and child by your damned rascality! Her name for the rest of her life will be the same as yours—just remember that when you forward that transfer. She is my wife. We were married an hour before I started."

And then the door closed, and the dark, malignant looking fellow stalked out into the morning sunlight, and through the odorous walk where late lilies nodded as he passed. He seemed little in keeping with their fragrant whiteness, for he looked not a whit less scowlingly wicked than on his entrance; and of some men working on the lawn, one said to another:

"Looks like he got de berry debbel in dem snappin' eyes—see how dey shine. Mighty rakish young genilman to walk out o' dat doah—look like he been on a big spree."

And when the bride and her friend came chattering in, with their hands full of roses, they found a strange, unheard-of thing had happened. The tall young husband, so strong, so long acclimated, had succumbed to the heat of the morning, or the fragrance of the tuberose beside him, and had fallen in a fainting fit by the door.

PART SECOND.

"A CULTUS CORRIE."

CHAPTER I.

ON SCOT'S MOUNTAIN.

"The de'il tak' them wi' their weeman folk, whose nerves are too delicate for a squaw man, or an Injun guide. I'd tak' no heed o' them if I was well, an' I'll do less now I'm plagued wi' this reminder o' that grizzly's hug. It gives me many's the twinge whilst out lookin' to the traps."

"Where's your gallantry, MacDougall?" asked a deep, rather musical voice from the cabin door; "and your national love for the 'winsome sex,' as I've heard you call it? If ladies are with them you can't refuse."

"Can I not? Well, I can that same now," said the first speaker, emphasizing his speech by the vim with which he pitched a broken-handled skillet into the cupboard—a cupboard made of a wooden box. "Mayhaps you think as I haven't seen a white woman these six months, I'll be a breakin' my neck to get to their camp across there. Well, I will not; they may be all very fine, no doubt—folk from the East; but ye well know a lot o' tenderfeet in the bush are a sight worse to tak' the care of than the wild things they'll be tryin' to hunt. 'A man's a fool who stumbles over the same stone twice,' is an old, true sayin', an' I know what I'm talkin' of. It's four years this autumn since I was down in the Walla Walla country, an'

there was a fine party from the East, just as these are; an' they would go up into the Blue Mountains, an' they would have me for a guide; an' if the Lord'll forgive me for associatin' with sich a pack o' lunatics for that trip, I'll never be caught wi' the same bait again."

"What did they do to you?" asked the voice, with a tinge of amusement in it.

"To me? They did naught to me but pester me wi' questions of insane devisin'. Scarce a man o' them could tether a beast or lasso one that was astray. They had a man servant, a sort o' flunky, to wait on them, and he just sat around like a bump on a log, and looked fearsomely for Injuns an' grizzlies. They would palaver until all hours in the night, about the scientific causes of all things we came across. Many a good laugh I might have had, if I had na been disgusted wi' the pretenses o' the poor bodies. Why, they knew not a thing but the learnin' o' books. They were from the East—down East, they said; that is, the Southeast, I suppose they meant to say; and their flunky said they were well-to-do at home, and very learned, the poor fools! Well, I'll weary myself wi' none others o' the same ilk."

"You're getting cranky, Mac, from being too much alone;" and the owner of the voice lounged lazily up from the seat of the cabin door, and stood looking in at the disgusted Scotchman, bending ever so slightly a dark, well-shaped head that was taller than the cross-piece above the door.

"Am I, now?" asked the old man, getting up stiffly from filling a pan of milk for the cat. "Well, then, I have a neighbor across on the Maple range that is subject o' late to the same complaint, but from a wide

difference o' reason;" and he nodded his head significantly at the man in the door, adding: "An' there's a subject for a debate, Jack Genesee, whether loneliness is worse on the disposition than the influence o' wrong company."

Jack Genesee straightened out of his lounging attitude, and stepped back from the door-way with a decision that would impress a man as meaning business.

"None o' that, MacDougall," he said curtly, dropping his hand with a hillman's instinct to the belt where his revolvers rested. "I reckon you and I will be better friends through minding our own business and keeping to our own territory in future;" and whistling to a beautiful brown mare that was browsing close to the cabin, he turned to mount her, when the old man crossed the floor quickly and laid a sinewy, brown hand on his arm.

"Bide a bit, Genesee," he said, his native accent always creeping upward in any emotion. "Friends are rare and scarce in this Chinook land. You're a bit hasty in your way, and mayhaps I'm a bit curious in mine; but I'll no let ye leave Davy MacDougall's like that just for the want o' sayin' I'm regretful at havin' said more than I should o' you and yours. I canna lose a friend o' four years for a trifle like that."

The frankness of the old man's words made the other man drop the bridle and turn back with outstretched hand.

"That's all right, Mac," he said heartily; "say no more about it. I am uglier than the d—l to get along with sometimes, and you're about straight when you say I'm a crank; only—well, it's nobody's fault but my own."

"No, o' course not," said MacDougall in a conciliatory tone as he went back to his dish-washing at the table—the dishes were tin pans and cups, and the dish-pan was an iron pot—"to be sure not; but the half-breeds are pizen in a man's cabin, an' that Talapa, wi' the name that's got from a prairie wolf an' the Injun de'il, is well called—a full-blood Injun is easier to manage, my lad; an' then," he added, quizzically, "I'm but givin' ye the lay o' the land where I've fought myself, an' mayhaps got wounded."

The "lad," who was about thirty-five, laughed heartily at this characteristic confession. There was evidently some decided incongruity between the old Scotchman's statement and his quaint housewifery, as he wrapped a cloth reduced to strings around a fork and washed out a coffee-pot with the improvised mop. Something there was in it that this man Genesee appreciated, and his continued laughter drew the beautiful mare again to his side, slipping her velvety nose close to his ear, and muzzling there like a familiar spirit that had a right to share her master's emotions.

"All right, Mowitza," he said in a promising tone; "we'll hit the bush by and by. But old sulky here is slinging poisoned arrows at our Kloocheman. We can't stand that, you know. We don't like cooking our own grub, do we, Mowitza? Shake your head and tell him '*halo*'—that's right. *Skookum Kiutan! Skookum*, Mowitza!"

And the man caressed the silky brown head, and murmured to her the Indian jargon of endearment and praise, and the mare muzzled closer and whinnied an understanding of her master; and MacDougall put away the last pan, threw a few knots of cedar on the bit of fire in the stone fire-place, and came to the door

just as the sun, falling back of the western mountains, threw a flood of glory about the old cabin of the mountaineer. The hill-grass back of it changed from uncertain green to spears of amber as the soft September winds stole through it. Away below in the valley, the purple gloom of dark spruces was burying itself in night's shadows. Here and there a poison-vine flashed back defiance under its crimson banners, and again a white-limbed aspen shone like a shapely ghost from between lichen-covered bowlders. But slowly the gloaming crept upward until the shadow-line fell at the cabin door, and then up, up, past spruce and cedar, past the scrub of the dwarf growths, past the invisible line that the snakes will not cross, on up to the splintered crest, where the snows glimmer in the sunshine, and about which the last rays of the sun linger and kiss and fondle, long after a good-bye has been given to the world beneath.

Such was but one of the many recurring vistas of beauty to which the dwellers of the northern hills are given delight in—if they care to open their eyes and see the smile that is glorious, with which earth ever responds to the kiss of God.

MacDougall had seen many of the grand panoramas which day and night on Scot's mountain give one, and he stood in the door unheeding this one. His keen eyes, under their shaggy brows, were directed to the younger man's bronzed face.

"There ye go!" he said, half peevishly; "ye jabber Chinook to that Talapa and to the mare until it's a wonder ye know any English at all; an' when ye be goin' back where ye belong, it'll be fine, queer times ye'll have with your ways of speech."

Genesee only laughed shortly—an Indian laugh, in which there is no melody.

"I don't reckon I belong anywhere, by this time, except in this Chinook region; consequently," he added, looking up in the old man's interested face, "consequently, I'm not likely to be moving anywhere, if that's what you're trying to find out."

MacDougall made a half-dissenting murmur against trying to find out anything, but Genesee cut him short without ceremony.

"The fact is, Mac," he continued; "you are a precious old galoot—a regular nervous old numbskull. You've been as restless as a new-caught grizzly ever since I went down to Cœur d'Alene, two weeks ago—afraid I was going to cut loose from Tamahnous Peak and pack my traps and go back to the diggin's; is that it? Don't lie about it. The whole trip wasn't worth a good lie, and all it panned out for me was empty pockets."

"Lord! lad, ye canna mean to say ye lost—"

"Every d—d red," finished Mr. Genesee complacently.

"An' how—"

"Cards and mixed drinks," he said, laconically. "Angels in the wine-rooms, and a slick individual at the table who had a better poker hand than I had. How's that as a trade for six months' work? How does it pan out in the balance with half-breeds?"

Evidently it staggered MacDougall. "It is no much like ye to dissipate, Genesee," he said, doubtfully. "O'course a man likes to try his chance on the chips once in a way, and to the kelpies o' the drinkin' places one must leave a few dollars, but the mixin' o' drinks or the muddlin' o' the brains is no natural to ye; it

may be a divarsion after the hill life, but there's many a kind that's healthier."

"You're a confounded old humbug," said Genesee coolly; "you preach temperance to me, and get drunk as a fiddler all alone here by yourself—not much Scotch in that way of drinking, I can tell you. Hello! who's that?"

MacDougall leaned forward and peered down the path where the sound of a horse's feet were heard coming around the bend.

"It's that man o' Hardy's comin' again about a guide, I have na doubt. I'll send him across Seven-mile Creek to Tyee-Kamooks. They can get a Siwash guide from him, or they can lose themsel's for all me," he said, grumpily, incited thereto, no doubt, by Genesee's criticism on his habits. He often grumbled that his friend from the Maple range was mighty "tetchy" about his own faults, and mighty cool in his opinions of others.

A dark, well-built horse came at an easy, swinging pace out of the gloom of the spruce boughs and over the green sward toward the cabin; his rider, a fair, fine-looking fellow, in a ranchman's buckskin suit, touched his hat ever so lightly in salute, a courtesy the others returned, Genesee adding the Chinook word that is either salutation or farewell, "*Klahowya*, stranger," and the old man giving the more English speech of "Good evening; won't ye light, stranger?"

"No; obliged to you, but haven't time. I suppose I'm speaking to Mr. MacDougall," and he took his eyes from the tall, dark form of Genesee to address his speech to the old trapper.

"Yes, I'm Davy MacDougall, an' I give a guess you're from the new sheep ranch that's located down Kootenai Park; you're one of Hardy's men."

"No; I'm Hardy."

"Are ye, now?" queried the old fellow in surprise. "I expected to see an older man—only by the cause of hearin' you were married, I suppose. Well, now, I'm right glad to meet wi' a new neighbor—to think of a ranch but a bit of ten miles from Scot's Mountain, an' a white family on it, too! Will ye no' light an' have a crack at a pipe an' a glass?"

Hardy himself was evidently making a much better impression on MacDougall than the messenger who had come to the cabin in the morning.

"No, partner, not any for me," answered the young ranchman, but with so pleasant a negative that even a Westerner could not but accept graciously such a refusal. "I just rode up from camp myself to see you about a guide for a small party over into the west branch of the Rockies. Ivans, who came to see you this morning, tells me that you are disabled yourself—"

"Yes; that is, I had a hug of a grizzly two weeks back that left the ribs o' my right side a bit sore; but—"

The old man hesitated; evidently his reluctance to act as guide to the poor fools was weakening. This specimen of an Eastern man was not at all the style of the tourists who had disgusted him so.

"An' so I told your man I *thought* I could na guide you," he continued in a debatable way, at which Hardy's blonde mustache twitched suspiciously, and Genesee stooped to fasten a spur that had not needed attention before; for the fact was Mac had felt "ower cranky" that morning, and the messenger had been a stupid fellow who irritated him until he swore by all the carpenter's outfit of a certain workman in Nazareth

that he would be no guide for "weemen folk and tenderfeet" in the hills. His vehemence had caused the refusal of Ivans to make a return trip, and Hardy, remembering Ivans' account, was amused, and had an idea that the dark, quiet fellow with the musical voice was amused as well.

"Yes," agreed the stranger; "I understood you could not come, but I wanted to ask if you could recommend an Indian guide. I had Jim Kale engaged—he's the only white man I know in this region; the men on my place are all from south of the Flathead country. He sent me word yesterday he couldn't come for a week—confound these squaw men! He's gone to hunt caribou with his squaw's people, so I brought my party so far myself, but am doubtful of the trail ahead. One of the ladies is rather nervous about Indians, and that prevented me from getting a guide from them at first; but if we continue, she must accustom herself to Montana surroundings."

"That's the worst o' the weemen folk when it comes to the hills," broke in MacDougall, "they've over easy to be frightened at shadows; a roof an' four walls is the best stoppin' place for a' o' them."

The young ranchman laughed easily.

"I don't believe you have known many of our Kentucky women, Mr. MacDougall; they are not hot-house plants, by any means."

Genesee pushed a wide-brimmed light hat back from his face a little, and for the first time joined the conversation.

"A Kentucky party, did you say, sir?" he queried, with half-careless interest.

"Yes," said Hardy, turning toward him; "relatives of mine from back East, and I wanted to give them a

taste of Montana hill life, and a little hunting. But I can't go any farther into the hills alone, especially as there are three ladies in the party; and a man can't take many risks when he has them to consider."

"That's so," said Genesee with brief sympathy; "big gang?"

"No—only six of us. My sister and her husband, and a cousin, a young lady, are the strangers. Then one of the men off my ranch who came to look after the pack-mules, and my wife and self. I have an extra horse for a guide if I can pick one up."

"I shouldn't be surprised if you could," said Genesee reflectively; "the woods are full of them, if you want Injun guides, and if you don't—well, it don't seem the right thing to let visitors leave the country disappointed, especially ladies, and I reckon I might take charge of your outfit for a week or so."

MacDougall nearly dropped his pipe in his surprise at the offer.

"Well, I'll be—" he began; but Genesee turned on him.

"What's the matter with that?" he asked, looking at Mac levelly, with a glance that said: "Keep your mouth shut." "If I want to turn guide and drop digging in that hill back there, why shouldn't I? It'll be the 'divarsion' you were suggesting a little while back; and if Mr. Hardy wants a guide, give me a recommend, can't you?"

"Do you know the country northwest of here?" asked Hardy eagerly. It was plain to be seen he was pleased at his "find." "Do you live here in the Chinook country? You may be a neighbor of mine, but I haven't the pleasure of knowing your name."

"That's Mac's fault," said the other fellow coolly;

"he's master of ceremonies in these diggin's, and has forgotten his business. They call me Genesee Jack mostly, and I know the Kootenai hills a little."

"Indeed, then, he does, Mr. Hardy," said MacDougall, finding his voice. "Ye'll find no Siwash born on the hills who knows them better than does Genesee, only he's been bewitched like, by picks and shovels an' a gulch in the Maple range, for so long it's a bit strange to see him actin' as guide; but you're a lucky man to be gettin' him, Mr. Hardy, I'll tell ye that much."

"I am willing to believe it," said Hardy frankly. "Could you start at once with us, in the morning?"

"I reckon so."

"I will furnish you a good horse," began the ranchman; but Genesee interrupted, shaking his head with a gesture of dissent.

"No, I think not," he said in the careless, musical voice that yet could be so decided in its softness; and he whistled softly, as a cricket chirrups, and the brown mare came to him with long, cat-like movements of the slender limbs, dropping her head to his shoulder.

"This bit of horse-flesh is good enough for me," he said, slipping a long, well-shaped hand over the silky cheek; "an' where I go, Mowitza goes—eh, pet?"

The mare whinnied softly as acknowledgment of the address, and Hardy noticed with admiration the fine points in her sinewy, supple frame.

"Mowitza," he repeated. "That in Chinook means the deer, does it not—or the elk; which is it? I haven't been here long enough to pick up much of the jargon."

"Well, then, ye'll be hearin' enough of it from Genesee," broke in MacDougall. "He'll be forget-

tin' his native language in it if he lives here five years longer; an'—"

"There, you've said enough," suggested Genesee. "After giving a fellow a recommend for solid work, don't spoil it by an account of his fancy accomplishments. You're likely to overdo it. Yes, Mowitza means a deer, and this one has earned her name. We'll both be down at your camp by sun-up to-morrow; will that do?"

"It certainly will," answered Hardy in a tone of satisfaction. "And the folks below will be mighty glad to know a white man is to go with us. Jim Kale rather made them doubtful of squaw men, and my sister is timid about Indians as steady company through the hills. I must get back and give them the good news. At sun-up to-morrow, Mr. Genesee?"

"At sun-up to-morrow."

CHAPTER II.

AS THE SUN ROSE.

Do you know the region of the Kootenai that lies in the northwest corner of a most northwestern State—where the "bunch-grass" of the grazing levels bends even now under a chance wild stallion and his harem of silken-coated mates; where fair upland "parks" spread back from the cool rush of the rivers; where the glittering peaks of the mountains glow at the rise and fall of night like the lances of a guard invincible, that lift their grand silence as a barrier against the puny strife of the outside world?

Do you know what it is to absorb the elastic breath of the mountains at the awakening of day? To stand far above the levels and watch the faint amethystine peaks catch one by one their cap of gold flung to them from an invisible sun? To feel the blood thrill with the fever of an infinite possession as the eyes look out alone over a seemingly creatureless scene of vastness, of indefiniteness of all vague promise, in the growing light of day? To feel the cool crispness of the heights, tempered by the soft "Chinook" winds? To feel the fresh wet dews of the morning on your hands and on your face, and to know them in a dim way odorous—odorous with the virginity of the hills—of the day dawn, with all the sweet things of form or feeling that the new day brings into new life?

A girl on Scot's Mountain seemed to breathe in all that intoxication of the hill country, as she stood on

a little level, far above the smoke of the camp-fire, and watched the glowing, growing lights on the far peaks. A long time she had stood there, her riding-dress gathered up above the damp grass, her cap in her hand, and her brown hair tossing in a bath of the winds. Twice a shrill whistle had called her to the camp hidden by the spruce boughs, but she had only glanced down toward the valley, shook her head mutinously, and returned to the study of her panorama; for it seemed so entirely her own—displaying its beauties for her sole surprisal—that it seemed discourteous to ignore it or descend to lower levels during that changing carnival of color. So she just nodded a negative to her unseen whistler below, determined not to leave, even at the risk of getting the leavings of the breakfast—not a small item to a young woman with a healthy, twenty-year-old appetite.

But something at last distracted that wrapt attention. What was it? She heard no sound, had noticed no movement but the stir of the wind in the leaves and the grasses, yet she shrugged her shoulders with a twitchy movement of being disturbed and not knowing by what. Then she gathered her skirts a little closer in her hand and took a step or so backward in an uncertain way, and a moment later clapped the cap on her tumbled hair, and turned around, looking square into the face of a stranger not a dozen steps from her, who was watching her with rather sombre, curious eyes. Their steady gaze accounted for the mesmeric disturbance, but her quick turn gave her revenge, for he flushed to the roots of his dark hair as she caught him watching her like that, and he did not speak just at first. He lifted his wide-brimmed hat, evidently with the intention of greeting her, but his tongue was

a little unruly, and he only looked at her, and she at him.

They stood so in reality only a flash of seconds, though it seemed a continuous stare of minutes to both; then the humorous side of the situation appealed to the girl, and her lips twitched ever so slightly as she recovered her speech first and said demurely:

"Good morning, sir."

"How are you?" he returned; and having regained the use of his tongue, he added, in an easier way: "You'll excuse me, lady, if I sort of scared you?"

"Oh, no, I was not at all startled," she answered hastily, "only a little surprised."

"Yes," he agreed, "so was I. That's why I stood there a-staring at you—couldn't just make out if you was real or a ghost, though I never before saw even the ghost of a white woman in this region."

"And you were watching to see if I would vanish into thin air like a Macbeth witch, were you?" she asked quizzically.

He might be on his native heath and she an interloper, but she was much the most at her ease—evidently a young lady of adaptability and considerable self-possession. His eyes had grown wavering and uncertain in their glances, and that flush made him still look awkward, and she wondered if Macbeth's witches were not unheard-of individuals to him, and she noticed with those direct, comprehensive eyes that a suit of buckskin can be wonderfully becoming to tall, lazy-looking men, and that wide, light sombreros have quite an artistic effect as a frame for dark hair and eyes; and through that decision she heard him say:

"No. I wasn't watching you for anything special,

only if you was a real woman, I reckoned you were prospecting around looking for the trail, and—and so I just waited to see, knowing you were a stranger."

"And is that all you know about me?" she asked mischievously. "I know much more than that about you."

"How much?"

"Oh, I know you're just coming from Davy MacDougall's, and you are going to Hardy's camp to act as commander-in-chief of the eastern tramps in it, and your name is Mr. Jack Genesee—and—and—that is all."

"Yes, I reckon it is," he agreed, looking at her in astonishment. "It's a good deal, considering you never saw me before, and I don't know—"

"And you don't know who I am," she rejoined easily. "Well, I can tell you that, too. I'm a wanderer from Kentucky, prospecting, as you would call it, for something new in this Kootenai country of yours, and my name is Rachel Hardy."

"That's a good, square statement," he smiled, put at his ease by the girl's frankness. "So you're one of the party I'm to look after on this *cultus corrie?*"

"Yes, I'm one of them—Cousin Hardy says the most troublesome of the lot, because I always want to be doing just the things I've no business to;" then she looked at him and laughed a little. "I tell you this at once," she added, "so you will know what a task you have undertaken, and if you're timid, you might back out before it's too late—are you timid?"

"Do I look it?"

"N—no;" but she didn't give him the scrutiny she had at first—only a swift glance and a little hurry to her next question: "What was that queer term you used when speaking of our trip—cul—cultus?"

"Oh, *cultus corrie!* That's Chinook for pleasure ride."

"Is it? What queer words they have. Cousin Harry was telling me it was a mongrel language, made up of Indian, French, English, and any stray words from other tongues that were adjustable to it. Is it hard to learn?"

"I think not—I learned it."

"What becoming modesty in that statement!" she laughed quizzically. "Come, Mr. Jack Genesee, suppose we begin our *cultus corrie* by eating breakfast together; they've been calling me for the past half-hour."

He whistled for Mowitza, and Miss Rachel Hardy recognized at once the excellence of this silken-coated favorite.

"Mowitza; what a musical name!" she remarked as she followed the new guide to the trail leading down the mountain. "It sounds Russian—is it?"

"No; another Chinook word—look out there; these stones are bad ones to balance on, they're too round, and that gully is too deep below to make it safe."

"I'm all right," she announced in answer to the warning as she amused herself by hopping bird-like from one round, insecure bowlder to another, and sending several bounding and crashing into the gully that cut deep into the heart of the mountain. "I can manage to keep my feet on your hills, even if I can't speak their language. By the way, I suppose you don't care to add Professor of Languages to your other titles, do you, Mr. Jack Genesee?"

"I reckon I'm in the dark now, Miss, sort of blindfold—can't catch onto what you mean."

"Oh, I was just thinking I might take up the study

of Chinook while out here, and go back home overwhelming the natives by my novel accomplishment;" and she laughed so merrily at the idea, and looked so quizzically at Genesee Jack's dark, serious face, that he smiled in sympathy.

They had only covered half the trail leading down to the camp, but already, through the slightly strange and altogether unconventional meeting, she found herself making remarks to him with the freedom of a long-known chum, and rather enjoying the curious, puzzled look with which he regarded her when she was quick enough to catch him looking at her at all.

"Stop a moment," she said, just as the trail plunged from the open face of the mountain into the shadow of spruce and cedar. "You see this every morning, I suppose, but it is a grand treat to me. See how the light has crept clear down to the level land now. I came up here long before there was a sign of the sun, for I knew the picture would be worth it. Isn't it beautiful?"

Her eyes, alight with youth and enthusiasm, were turned for a last look at the sun-kissed country below, to which she directed his attention with one bare, outstretched hand.

"Yes, it is," he agreed; but his eyes were not on the valley of the Kootenai, but on the girl's face.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT IS A SQUAW MAN?

"Rache, I want you to stop it." The voice had an insinuating tone, as if it would express "will you stop it?"

The speaker was a chubby, matronly figure, enthroned on a hassock of spruce boughs, while the girl stretched beside her was drawing the fragrant spikes of green, bit by bit, over closed eyes and smiling; only the mouth and chin could be seen under the green veil, but the corners of the mouth were widening ever so little. Smiles should engender content; they are supposed to be a voucher of sweet thoughts, but at times they have a tendency to bring out all that is irritable in human nature, and the chubby little woman noted that growing smile with rising impatience.

"I am not jesting," she continued, as if there might be a doubt on that question; "and I wish you would stop it."

"You haven't given *it* a name yet. Say, Clara, that sounds like an invitation to drink, doesn't it?—a western invitation."

But her fault-finder was not going to let her escape the subject like that.

"I am not sure it has a name," she said curtly. "No one seems to know whether it is Genesee Jack or Jack Genesee, or whether both are not aliases—in fact, the most equivocal sort of companion for a young girl over these hills."

"What a tempest you raise about nothing, Clara," said the girl good-humoredly; "one would think that I was in hourly danger of being kidnaped by Mr. Genesee Jack—the name is picturesque in sound, and suits him, don't you think so? But I am sure the poor man is quite harmless, and stands much more in awe of me than I do of him."

"I believe you," assented her cousin tartly. "I never knew you to stand in awe of anything masculine, from your babyhood. You are a born flirt, for all your straightforward, independent ways. Oh, I know you."

"So I hear you say," answered Miss Hardy, peering through the screen of cedar sprays, her eyes shining a little wickedly from their shadows. "You have a hard time of it with me, haven't you, dear? By the way, Clara, who prompted you to this lecture—Hen?"

"No, Hen did not; neither he nor Alec seem to have eyes or ears for anything but deer and caribou; they are constantly airing their new-found knowledge of the country. I had to beg Alec to come to sleep last night, or I believe they would have gossiped until morning. The one redeeming point in your Genesee Jack is that he doesn't talk."

"He isn't my Genesee Jack," returned the girl; "but he does talk, and talk well, I think. You do not know him, that is all, and you never will, with those starchy manners of yours. Not talk!—why, he has taught me a lot of Chinook, and told me all about a miner's life and a hunter's. Not talk!—I've only known him a little over a week, and he has told me his life for ten years back."

"Yes, with no little encouragement from you, I'll wager."

"Well, my bump of curiosity was enlarged some

what as to his life," acknowledged the girl. "You see he has such an unusual personality, unusually interesting, I mean. I never knew any man like him in the East. Why, he only needs a helmet instead of the sombrero, and armor instead of the hunting suit, and he would make an ideal Launcelot."

"Good gracious, Rache! do stop raving over the man, or I shall certainly have Hen discharge him and take you back to civilization at once."

"But perhaps I won't go back—what then; and perhaps Hen could not be able to see your reason for getting rid of a good guide," said the girl coolly, knowing she had the upper hand of the controversy; "and as to the raving, you know I never said a word about him until you began to find fault with everything, from the cut of his clothes to the name he gives, and then—well, a fellow must stand up for his friends, you know."

"Of course a fellow must," agreed someone back of them, and the young ranchman from the East came down under the branches from the the camp-fire just kindled; "that is a manly decision, Rache, and does you credit. But what's the argument?"

"Oh, Clara thinks I am taking root too quickly in the soil of loose customs out here," explained the girl, covering the question, yet telling nothing.

"She doesn't approve of our savage mode of life, does she?" he queried, sympathetically; "and she hasn't seen but a suggestion of its horrors yet. Too bad Jim Kale did not come; she could have made the acquaintance of a specimen that would no doubt be of interest to her—a squaw man with all his native charms intact."

"Hen," said the girl, rising on her elbow, "I wish

you would tell me just what you mean by a 'squaw man;' is it a man who buys squaws, or sells them, or eats them, or—well, what does he do?"

"He marries them—sometimes," was the laconic reply, as if willing to drop the question. But Miss Rache, when interested, was not to be thrust aside until satisfied.

"Is that all?" she persisted; "is he a sort of Mormon, then—an Indian Mormon? And how many do they marry?"

"I never knew them to marry more than one," hazarded Mr. Hardy. "But, to tell the truth, I know very little about their customs; I understand they are generally a worthless class of men, and the term 'squaw man' is a stigma, in a way—the most of them are rather ashamed of it, I believe."

"I don't see why," began Rache.

"No, I don't suppose you do," broke in her cousin Hardy with a relative's freedom, "and it is not necessary that you should; just confine your curiosity to other phases of Missoula County that are open for inspection, and drop the squaw men."

"I haven't picked any of them up yet," returned the girl, rising to her feet, "but I will the first chance I get; and I give you fair warning, you might as well tell me all I want to know, for I will find out."

"I'll wager she will," sighed Clara, as the girl walked away to where their traps and sachels were stacked under a birch tree, and while she turned things topsy-turvy looking for something, she nodded her head sagaciously over her shoulder at the two left behind; "to be sure she will—she is one of the girls who are always stumbling on just the sort of knowledge that should be kept from them; and this question

of your horrid social system out here—well, she will know all about it if she has to interview Ivans or your guide to find out; and I suppose it is an altogether objectionable topic?"

The intonation of the last words showed quite as much curiosity as the girl had declared, only it was more carefully veiled.

"Oh, I don't know as it is," returned her brother; "except under—well—circumstances. But, some way, a white man is mightily ashamed to have it known that he has a squaw wife. Ivans told me that many of them would as soon be shot as to have it known back East where they came from."

"Yes," remarked a gentleman who joined them during this speech, and whose brand-new hunting suit bespoke the "got-up-regardless" tourist; "it is strange, don't you think so? Why, back East we would hear of such a marriage and think it most romantic; but out here—well, it seems hard to convince a Westerner that there is any romance about an Indian."

"And I don't wonder, Alec, do you?" asked Mrs. Houghton, turning to her husband as if sure of sympathy from him; "all the squaws we have seen are horribly slouchy, dirty creatures. I have yet to see the Indian maiden of romance."

"In their original state they may have possessed all the picturesque dignities and chivalrous character ascribed to them," answered Mr. Houghton, doubtfully; "but if so, their contact with the white race has caused a vast degeneration."

"Which it undoubtedly has," returned Hardy, decidedly. "Mixing of races always has that effect, and in the Indian country it takes a most decided turn. The Siwash or Indian men of this territory may be

a thieving, whisky-drinking lot, but the chances are that nine-tenths of the white men who marry among them become more worthless and degraded than the Indian."

"There are, I suppose, exceptions," remarked Houghton.

"Well, there may be," answered Hardy; "but they are not taken into consideration, and that is why a man dislikes to be classed among them. There is something of the same feeling about it that there is back home about a white man marrying a negro."

"Then why do they do it, if they are ashamed of it?" queried Mrs. Houghton with logical directness.

"Well, I suppose because there are no white women here for them to marry," answered her brother, "and Indians or half-breeds are always to be found."

"If ministers are not," added Houghton.

"Exactly!"

"Oh, good gracious!" ejaculated the little matron in a tone of disgust; "no wonder they are ashamed—even the would-be honest ones are likely to incur suspicion, because, as you say, the exceptions are too few for consideration. A truly delightful spot you have chosen; the moral atmosphere would be a good field for a missionary, I should say—yet you would come here."

"Yes, and I am going to stay, too," said Hardy, in answer to this sisterly tirade. "We see or know but little of those poor devils or their useless lives—only we know by hearing that such a state of things exists. But as for quitting the country because of that—well, no, I could not be bought back to the East after knowing this glorious climate. Why, Tillie and I have picked out a tree to be buried under—a

magnificent fellow that grows on the plateau above our house—just high enough to view the Four-mile Park from. She is as much in love with the freedom of these hills as I am."

"Poor child!" said his sister, commiseratingly; "to think of her being exiled in that park, twenty miles from a white woman!—didn't you say it was twenty?"

"Yes," and her brother leaned his back against the tree and smiled down at her; "it's twenty and a half, and the white woman whom you see at the end of the trip keeps a tavern—runs it herself, and sells the whisky that crosses the bar with an insinuating manner that is all her own. I've heard that she can sling an ugly fist in a scrimmage. She is a great favorite with the boys; the pet name they have for her is Holland Jin."

"Ugh! Horrible! And she—she allows them to call her so?"

"Certainly; you see it is a trade-mark for the house; her real name is Jane Holland."

"Holland Jin!" repeated his sister with a shudder. "Tillie, come here! Have you heard this? Hen has been telling me of your neighbor, Holland Jin. How do you expect to live always in this out-of-the-way place?"

Out from under the branches where their camp had just been located came Tillie, a charmingly plain little wife of less than a year—just her childishly curved red lips and her soft dark eyes to give attractiveness to her tanned face.

"Yes, I have heard of her," she said in a slow, half-shy way; "she can't be very—very—nice; but one of the stockmen said she was good-hearted if anyone was sick or needed help, so she can't be quite bad."

"You dear little soul," said her sister-in-law fondly; "you would have a good word to say for anyone; but you must allow it will be awfully dismal out here without any lady friends."

"You are here, and Rache."

"Yes, but when Rache and I have gone back to civilization?"

The dark eyes glanced at the speaker and then at the tall young ranchman. "Hen will be here always."

"Oh, you insinuating little Quaker!" laughed the older woman; "one would think you were married yesterday and the honeymoon only begun, would you not, Alec? I wonder if these Chinook winds have a tendency to softening the brain—have they, Hen? If so, you and Tillie are in a dangerous country. What was it you shot this time, Alec—a pole-cat or a flying-squirrel? Yes, I'll go and see for myself."

And she followed her husband across the open space of the plateau to where Ivans was cutting slices of venison from the latest addition to their larder; while Hardy stood smiling down, half amusedly, at the flushed face of the little wife.

"Are you afraid of softening of the brain?" he asked in a tone of concern. She shook her head, but did not look up. She was easily teased, as much so about her husband as if he was still a wooer. And to have shown her fondness in his sister's eyes! What sister could ever yet see the reason for a sister-in-law's blind adoration?

"Are you going to look on yourself as a martyr after the rest have left you here in solitary confinement with me as a jailer?"

Another shake of the head, and the drooped eyes were raised for one swift glance.

"Because I was thinking," continued her tormentor —"I was thinking that if the exile, as Clara calls it, would be too severe on you, I might, if it was for your own good—I might send you back with the rest to Kentucky."

Then there was a raising of the head quick enough, and a tempestuous flight across the space that separated them, and a flood of remonstrances that ended in happy laughter, a close clasp of arms, and—yes, in spite of the girl who was standing not very far away—a kiss; and Hardy circled his wife's shoulders with his long arms, and, with a glance of laughing defiance at his cousin, drew her closer and followed in the wake of the Houghtons.

The girl had deliberately stood watching that little scene with a curious smile in her eyes, a semi-cynical gaze at the lingering fondness of voice and touch. There was no envy in her face, only a sort of good-natured disbelief. Her cousin Clara always averred that Rachel was too masculine in spirit to ever understand the little tendernesses that burnish other women's lives.

CHAPTER IV.

BANKED FIRES.

She did not look masculine, however, as she stood there, slender, and brown from the tan of the winds; the unruly, fluffy hair clustering around a face and caressing a neck that was essentially womanly in every curve; only, slight as the form seemed, one could find strong points in the depth of chest and solid look of the shoulders; a veteran of the roads would say those same points in a bit of horse-flesh would denote capacity for endurance, and, added to the strong-looking hand and the mockery latent in the level eyes, they completed a personality that she had all her life heard called queer. And with a smile that reflected that term, she watched those two married lovers stroll arm in arm to where the freshly-killed deer lay. Glancing at the group, she missed the face of their guide, a face she had seen much of since that sunrise in the Kootenai. Across the sward a little way the horses were picketed, and Mowitza's graceful head was bent in search for the most luscious clusters of the bunch-grass; but Mowitza's master was not to be seen. She had heard him speak, the night before, of signs of grizzlies around the shank of the mountain, and wondered if he had started on a lone hunt for them. She was conscious of a half-resentful feeling that he had not given her a chance of going along, when he knew she wanted to see everything possible in this out-of-door life in the hills.

So, in some ill-humor, she walked aimlessly across the grass where Clara's lecture on the conventionalities had been delivered; and pushing ahead under the close-knit boughs, she was walking away from the rest, led by that spirit of exploration that comes naturally to one in a wilderness, and parting a wide-spreading clump of laurel, was about to wedge her way through it, when directly on the other side of that green wall she saw Genesee, whom she had supposed was alone after a grizzly. Was he asleep? He was lying face downward under the woven green roof that makes twilight in the cedars. The girl stopped, about to retrace her steps quietly, when a sudden thought made her look at him more closely, with a devout prayer in her heart that he *was* asleep, and asleep soundly; for her quick eyes had measured the short distance between that resting-place and the scene of conversation but a few minutes ago. She tried wildly to remember what Clara had said about him, and, most of all, what answers Clara had received. She had no doubt said things altogether idiotic, just from a spirit of controversy, and here the man had been within a few feet of them all the time! She felt like saying something desperately, expressively masculine; but instead of easing her feelings in that manner, she was forced to complete silence and a stealthy retreat.

Was he asleep, or only resting? The uncertainty was aggravating. And a veritable Psyche, she could not resist the temptation of taking a last, sharp look. She leaned forward ever so little to ascertain, and thus lost her chance of retreating unseen; for among the low-hanging branches was one on which there were no needles of green—a bare, straggling limb with twigs

like the fingers of black skeletons. In bending forward, she felt one of them fasten itself in her hair; tugging blindly and wildly, at last she loosened their impish clutches, and left as trophy to the tree some erratic, light-brown hair and—she gave up in despair as she saw it—her cap, that swung back and forward, just out of reach.

If it only staid there for the present, she would not care so much; but it was so tantalizingly insecure, hanging by a mere thread, and almost directly above the man. Fascinated by the uncertainty, she stood still. Would it stay where it was? Would it fall?

The silent query was soon answered—it fell, dropped lightly down on the man's shoulder, and he, raising his head from the folded arms, showed a face from which the girl took a step back in astonishment. He had not been asleep, then; but to the girl's eyes he looked like a man who had been either fighting or weeping. She had never seen a face so changed, telling so surely of some war of the emotions. He lay in the shadow, one hand involuntarily lifting itself as a shade for his eyes while he looked up at her.

"Well!" The tone was gruff, almost hoarse; it was as unlike him as his face at that moment, and Rachel Hardy wondered, blankly, if he was drunk—it was about the only reasonable explanation she could give herself. But even with it she could not be satisfied; there was too much quick anger at the thought—not anger alone, but a decided feeling of disappointment in the man. To be sure, she had been influenced by no one to have faith in him; still—someway—

"Are you—are you ill, Mr. Genesee?" she asked at last.

"Not that I know of."

What a bear the man was! she thought; what need was there to answer a civil question in that tone. It made her just antagonistic enough not to care so much if his feelings had been hurt by Clara's remarks, and she asked bluntly:

"Have you been here long?"

"Some time."

"Awake?"

"Well, yes," and he made a queer sound in his throat, half grunt, half laugh; "I reckon I—was—awake."

The slow, half-bitter words impelled her to continue:

"Then you—you heard the—the conversation over there?"

He looked at her, and she thought his eyes were pretty steady for a drunken man's.

"Well, yes," he repeated, "I reckon—I—heard it."

All her temper blazed up at the deliberate confession. If he had seemed embarrassed or wounded, she would have felt sorry; but this stoicism angered her, as the idea of drunkenness had done—perhaps because each set herself and her feelings aside—I do not know, but that may have been the reason; she was a woman.

"And you deliberately lay here and listened," she burst out wrathfully, "and let us say all sorts of things, no doubt, when it was your place as a gentleman to let us know you were here? I—I would not have taken you for an eavesdropper, Mr. Jack Genesee!" And with this tirade she turned to make her way back through the laurel.

"Here!"

She obeyed the command in his voice, thinking, as

she did so, how quick the man was to get on his feet. In a stride he was beside her, his hand outstretched to stop her; but it was not necessary, his tone had done that, and he thrust both hands into the pockets of his hunting coat.

"Stop just where you are for a minute, Miss," he said, looking down at her; "and don't be so infernally quick about making a judge and jury of yourself—and you look just now as if you'd like to be sheriff, too. I make no pretense of being a gentleman of culture, so you can save yourself the trouble of telling me the duty of one. What little polish I ever had has been knocked off in ten years of hill life out here. I'm not used to talking to ladies, and my ways may seem mighty rough to you; but I want you to know I wasn't listening—I would have got away if I could, but I —was paralyzed."

"What?" Her tone was coldly unbelieving.

His manner was collected enough now. He was talking soberly, if rather brusquely; but—that strange look in his face at first? and the eyes that burned as if for the lack of tears?—those were things not yet understood.

"Yes," he continued, "that's what it was, I reckon. I heard what she said; she is right, too, when she says I'm no fit company for a lady. I hadn't thought of it before, and it started me to thinking—thinking fast—and I just lay still there and forgot everything only them words; and then I heard the things you said—mighty kind they were, too, but I wasn't thinking of them much—only trying to see myself as people of your sort would see me if they knew me as I do, and I concluded I would pan out pretty small; then I heard something else that was good for me, but bitter

to take. And then—" His voice grew uncertain; he was not looking at the girl, but straight ahead of him, his features softened, his eyes half closed at some memory.

"And then what, Genesee?" She felt a little sorry for him as he was speaking—a little kinder since he had owned his own unworthiness. A touch of remorse even led her to lay a couple of fingers on the sleeve of his coat, to remind him of her presence as she repeated: "And then?"

He glanced down at the fingers;—the glance made the hand drop to her side very quickly—and then he coolly brushed his sleeve carefully with the other hand.

"Then for a little bit I was let get a glimpse of what heaven on earth might mean to a man, if he hadn't locked the door against himself and dropped into hell instead. This is a blind trail I'm leading on, is it, Miss?—all *iso-lo.* Well, it don't matter; you would have to drop into a pretty deep gulch yourself before you could understand, and you'll never do that—the Almighty forbid!" he added, energetically. "You belong to the mountains and the high places, and you're too sure-footed not to stay there. You can go now. I only stopped you to say that my listening mightn't have been in as mean a spirit as you judged. Judging things you don't understand is bad business anyway—let it alone."

And with that admonition he turned away, striding through the laurel growth and spruce, and on down the mountain, leaving Miss Hardy feeling more lectured and astonished than she had often been in her life.

"Well, upon my word!"

It is not an original exclamation—she was not equal to any original thought just then; but for some time after his disappearance that was all she could find to say, and she said it standing still there, bare-headed and puzzled; then, gathering up her faculties and her skirts, she made her way back through the low growth, and sat down where Clara and herself had sat only a little while before.

"And Clara says he don't talk!" she soliloquized, with a faint smile about her lips. "Not talk!—he did not give me a chance to say a word, even if I had wanted to. I feel decidedly 'sat upon,' as Hen would say, and I suppose I deserved it."

Then she missed her cap, and went to look for it; but it was gone. She remembered seeing it in his hand; he must have forgotten and taken it with him. Then she sat down again, and all the time his words, and the way he had said them, kept ringing in her head—"Judging things you don't understand is bad business."

Of course he was right; but it seemed strange for her to be taken to task by a man like that on such a subject—an uncouth miner and hunter in the Indian hills. But was he quite uncouth? While he made her stop and listen, his earnestness had overleaped that slurred manner of speech that belongs to the ignorant of culture. His words had been clearer cut. There had been the ring of finished steel in his voice, not the thud of iron in the ore, and it had cut clear a path of revelations. The man, then, could do more than ride magnificently, and look a Launcelot in buckskin—he could think—how deeply and wildly had been shown by the haggard face she had seen. But the cause of it? Even his disjointed explanation had given her no clue.

"*Tso-lo*," she thought, repeating the Chinook word he had used; "that means to lose one's way,—to wander in the dark. Well, he was right. That is what I am doing;" and then she laughed half mockingly at herself as she added: "And Mr. Jack Genesee has started me on the path—and started me bare-headed. Oh, dear, what a muddle! I wonder where my cap is, and I wonder where the man went to, and I wonder—I wonder what he meant by a glimpse of heaven. I haven't seen any signs of it."

But she had seen it—seen it and laughed mockingly, unbelievingly, while the man had by the sight been touched into a great heart-ache of desolation. And yet it was a commonplace thing they had seen: only two lives bound together by the wish of their hearts and a ring of wedding—an affection so honest that its fondness could be frankly shown to the world.

* * * * * *

That evening Genesee came back to camp looking tired, and told Ivans there was a grizzly waiting to be skinned in a gully not far off. He had had a hard tussle after it and was too tired to see to the pelt; and then he turned to Miss Hardy and drew her cap from his pocket.

"I picked it up back there in the brush, and forgot to give it to you before going out," he said.

That was all—no look or manner that showed any remembrance of their conversation. And for the next two days the girl saw very little of their guide; no more long gallops ahead of the party. Mr. Genesee had taken a sedate turn, and remained pretty close to the rest, and if any of the ladies got more of his attention than another it was Mrs. Hardy.

He had for her something approaching veneration. In her tender, half-shy love of her husband she seemed

to him as the Madonna to those of the Roman church —a symbol of something holy—of a purity of affection unknown to the rough man of the hills. Unpretentious little Tillie would have been amazed if she had suspected the pedestal she occupied in the imagination of this dark-faced fellow, whose only affection seemed to be lavished on Mowitza. Clara always looked at him somewhat askance; and in passing a party of the Indians who were berry-hunting in the mountains, she noted suspiciously his ready speech in their own language, and the decided deference paid him by them; and the stolid stare of the squaws filled her with forebodings of covetousness for her raiment—of which several of them rather stood in need, though the weather *was* warm—and that night was passed by her in waking dreams of an Indian massacre, with their guide as a leader of the enemy.

"Do you know them very well?" asked Miss Hardy, riding up to Genesee. "Is it entirely Chinook they are talking? Let me try my knowledge of it. I should like to speak to them in their jargon. Can I?"

"You can try. Here's a Siwash, a friend of mine, who is as near a Boston (American) man as any of them—try him."

And, under Genesee's tuition, she asked several questions of the berry yield in the hills, and the distance to markets where pelts could be sold; and the Indian answered briefly, expressing distance as much by the sweep of his hand toward the west as by the adjective "*siah-si-ah;*" and Miss Hardy, well satisfied with her knowledge, would have liked to add to her possessions the necklace of bear's claws that adorned the bronze throat of the gentleman who answered her questions.

The squaws slouched around the camp, curious and dirty, here and there a half-breed showing the paler blood through olive skin. The younger women or girls were a shade less repulsive than their mothers, but none showed material for a romance of Indian life. They were as spiritless as ill-kept cattle.

Back of some tethered ponies Miss Hardy noticed a dark form dodging as if to avoid being seen. A squaw possessed of shyness was such a direct contradiction of those she had seen, that the white girl found herself watching the Indian one with a sort of curiosity—in fact, rode her horse over in the direction of the ponies, thinking the form she had got a glimpse of was only a child; but it was not, for back of the ponies it lay flat to the ground as a snake, only the head raised, the eyes meeting those of Miss Hardy with a half scowl, and the bright-beaded dress outlining the form of a girl perhaps twenty years old, and dressed much neater than any she had seen in the camp. By the light tinge of color she was evidently a half-breed, and the white girl was about to turn her horse's head, when, with a low exclamation, the other seized a blanket that had slipped from a pony, and quick as a flash had rolled her plump form in it, head and heels, and dropped like one asleep, face downward, in the trampled grass.

Wondering at the sudden hiding and its cause, Miss Hardy turned away and met Genesee, who was riding toward her.

"Shaky-looking stock," he commented, supposing she was looking at the ponies. "The rest are going on, Miss; we have to do some traveling to reach our last camp by night-fall."

As they rode away, Miss Hardy turned for a last

look at that mummy-looking form by the ponies. It apparently had not moved. She wondered if it was Genesee the girl hid from, and if so, why? Was their guide one of those heroes of the border whose face is a thing of terror to Indian foe? And was the half-breed girl one of the few timid ones? She could not answer her own questions, and something kept her from speaking to Genesee of it; in fact, she did not speak to him of anything with the same freedom since that conversation by the laurel bushes.

Sometimes she would laugh a little to herself as she thought of how he had brushed off that coat-sleeve; it had angered her, amused her, and puzzled her. That entire scene seemed a puzzling, unreal sort of an affair to her sometimes, especially when looking at their guide as he went about the commonplace duties in the camp or on the trail. An undemonstrative, prosaic individual she knew he appeared to the rest; laconic and decided when he did speak, but not a cheery companion. To her always, after that day, he was a suggestion of a crater in which the fires were banked.

CHAPTER V.

AT LAST CAMP.

After their stop at the Indian camp, which Genesee explained was a berrying crowd from the Kootenai tribe, there was, of course, comment among the visitors as to the mixed specimens of humanity they had seen there.

"I don't wonder a white man is ashamed of an Indian wife," said Mrs. Houghton. "What slouchy creatures!"

"All the more reason for a white man to act the part of missionary, and marry them," remarked Rachel Hardy, "and teach them what the domestic life of a woman should be."

Genesee turned square around to look at the speaker —perhaps she did not strike him as being a domestic woman herself. Whatever the cause of that quick attention, she noticed it, and added: "Well, Mr. Genesee, don't you think so? You must have seen considerable of that sort of life."

"I have—some," he answered concisely, but showing no disposition to discuss it, while Mrs. Houghton was making vain efforts to engage Miss Hardy's attention by the splendid spread of the country below them; but it was ineffectual.

"Yes, Clara, I see the levels along that river— I've been seeing them for the past two hours—but just now I am studying the social system of those hills;" and then she turned again to their guide.

"You did not answer my question, Mr. Genesee," she said, ignoring Mrs. Houghton's admonishing glances. "Do you not agree with my idea of marriages between whites and Indians?"

"No!" he said bluntly; "most of the white men I know among the Indians need themselves to be taught how people should live; they need white women to teach them. It's uphill work showing an Indian how to live decent when a man has forgotten how himself. Missionary work! Squaw men are about as fit for that as—as hell's fit for a powder-house."

And under this emphatic statement and the shocked expression of Clara's face, Miss Hardy collapsed, with the conviction that there must be lights and shades of life in the Indian country that did not make themselves apparent to the casual visitor. She wondered sometimes that Genesee had lived there so long with no family ties, and she seldom heard him speak of any white friend in Montana—only of old Davy MacDougall sometimes. Most of his friends had Indian names. Altogether, it seemed a purposeless sort of existence.

"Do you expect to live your life out here, like this?" she asked him once. "Don't you ever expect to go back home?"

"Hardly! There is nothing to take me back now."

"And only a horse and a gun to keep you here?" she smiled.

"N—no; something besides, Miss. I've got a right smart of a ranch on the other side of the Maple range. It's running wild—no stock on it; but in Tamahnous Hill there's a hole I've been digging at for the past four years. MacDougall reckons I'm 'witched' by it, but it may pan out all right some of these days."

"Gold hunting?"

"No, Miss, silver; and it's there. I've got tired more than once and given it the *klatawa* (the go-by); but I'd always come back, and I reckon I always will until I strike it."

"And then?"

"Well, I haven't got that far yet."

And thus any curiosity about the man's life or future was generally silenced. He had told her many things of the past; his life in the mines of Colorado and Idaho, with now and then the diversion of a government scout's work along the border. All of that he would speak of without reserve, but of the actual present or of the future he would say nothing.

"I have read somewhere in a book of a man without a past," remarked the girl to Mrs. Hardy; "but our guide seems a man utterly without a future."

"Perhaps he does not like to think of it here alone," suggested Tillie thoughtfully; "he must be very lonely sometimes. Just see how he loves that horse!"

"Not a horse, Tillie— a *klootchman kiuatan*," corrected the student of Chinook; "if you are going to live out here, you must learn the language of the hills."

"You are likely to know it first;" and then, after a little, she added: "But noticing that man's love for his Mowitza, I have often thought how kind he would be to a wife. I think he has a naturally affectionate nature, though he does swear—I heard him; and to grow old and wild here among the Indians and squaw men seems too bad. He is intelligent—a man who might accomplish a great deal yet. You know he is comparatively young—thirty-five, I heard Hen say."

"Yes," said Mrs. Houghton sarcastically; "a good

age at which to adopt a child. You had better take him back as one of the fixtures on the ranch, Tillie; of course he may need some training in the little courtesies of life, but no doubt Rachel would postpone her return East and offer her services as tutor;" and with this statement Mistress Houghton showed her disgust of the entire subject.

"She is 'riled,'" said the girl, looking quizzically after the plump retreating form.

"Why, what in the world—"

"Nothing in the world, Tillie, and that's what's the matter with Clara. Her ideas of the world are, and always will be, bounded by the rules and regulations of Willow Centre, Kentucky. Of course it isn't to be found on a map of the United States, but it's a big place to Clara; and she doesn't approve of Mr. Genesee because he lives outside its knowledge. She intimated yesterday that he might be a horse-thief for any actual acquaintance we had with his resources or manner of living."

"Ridiculous!" laughed Tillie. "That man!"

The girl slipped her arm around the little wife's waist and gave her a hug like a young bear. She had been in a way lectured and snubbed by that man, but she bore no malice.

The end of their *cultus corrie* was reached as they went into camp for a two-days' stay, on the shoulder of a mountain from which one could look over into the Idaho hills, north into British Columbia, and through the fair Kootenai valleys to the east, where the home-ranch lay.

Houghton and Hardy each had killed enough big game to become inoculated with the taste for wild life, and the ladies were delighted with the idea of

having the spoils of the hunt for the adornment of their homes; and altogether the trip was voted a big success.

Is there anything more appetizing, after a long ride through the mountains, than to rest under the cedars at sunset and hear the sizzle of broiled meat on the red coals, and have the aroma of coffee borne to you on the breeze that would lull you to sleep if you were not so hungry?

"I could have eaten five meals during every twenty-four hours since we started," acknowledged Rachel, as she watched with flattering attention the crisping slices of venison that were accumulating on a platter by the fire.

And she looked as if both the appetite and the wild living had agreed with her. Clara complained that Rachel really seemed to pride herself on the amount of tan she had been able to gather from the wind and the sun, while Hardy decided that only her light hair would keep her from being taken for an Indian.

But for all the looks that were gaining a tinge of wildness, and the appetites that would persist in growing ravenous, it was none the less a jolly, pleasant circle that gathered about the evening meal, sometimes eaten on a large flat stone, if any were handy, and again on the grass, where the knives and small articles of table-ware would lose themselves in the tall spears; but, whatever was used as a table, the meal in the evening was the domestic event of the day. At midday there was often but a hasty lunch; breakfast was simply a preparation for travel. But in the evening all were prepared for rest and the enjoyment of either eatables or society. And until the darkness fell there was the review of the day's hunt by the men—Hardy and Houghton vying with

each other in their recitals—or, as Ivans expressed it, "swappin' lies"—around the fire. Sometimes there would be singing, and through the notes of night-birds in the forest would sound the call of human throats echoing upward in old hymns that all had known sometime, in the East. And again Tillie would sing them a ballad or a love-song in a sweet, fresh voice; or, with Clara, Hardy, and Houghton, a quartette would add volume to some favorite, their scout a silent listener. Rachel never sang with the rest; she preferred whistling, herself. And many a time when out of sight of her on the trail, she was located by that boyish habit she had of echoing the songs of many of the birds that were new to her, learning their notes, and imitating them so well as to bring many a decoyed answer from the woods.

Between herself and the guide there was no more their former *comaraderie*. They had never regained their old easy, friendly manner. Still, she asked him that night at "last camp" of the music of the Indians. Had they any? Could he sing it? Had there ever been any of their music published? etc.

And he told them of the airs that were more like chants, like the echoes of whispering or moaning forests, set to human words; of the dusky throats that, without training, yet sang together with never a discord; of the love-songs that had in them the minor tones of sadness. Only their war-songs seemed to carry brightness, and they only when echoes of victory.

In the low, glowing light of the fire, when the group around it faded in the darkness, he seemed to forget his many listeners, and talked on as if to only one. To the rest it was as if they had met a

stranger there that evening for the first time, and found him entertaining. Even Mrs. Houghton dropped her slightly supercilious manner toward him, a change to which he was as indifferent as to her coolness. It may have been Tillie's home-songs in the evening that unlocked his lips; or it may have been the realization that the pleasure-trip was ended—that in a short time he would know these people no more, who had brought him home-memories in their talk of home-lives. It may have been a dash of recklessness that urged him to enjoy it for a little only—this association that suggested so much of which he had long been a stranger to. Whatever the impulse was, it showed a side of his nature that only Rachel had gained any knowledge of through those first bright, eager days of their *cultus corrie.*

At Tillie's request he repeated some remembered fragments of Indian songs that had been translated into the Red's language, and which he gave them the English version or meaning of, as well as he could. A couple of them he knew entire, and to Tillie's delight he hummed the plaintive airs until she caught the notes. And even after the rest had quietly withdrawn and rolled themselves in blankets for the night's rest, Hardy and his wife and Genesee still sat there with old legends of *Tsiatko,* the demon of the night, for company, and with strange songs in which the music would yet sound familiar to any ears used to the shrilling of the winds through the timber, or the muffled moans of the wood-dove.

And in the sweet dusk of the night, Rachel, the first to leave the fire, lay among the odorous, spicy branches of the cedar and watched the picture of the group about the fire. All was in darkness, save

when a bit of reflected red would outline form or feature, and they looked rather uncanny in the red-and-black coloring. An Indian council or the grouping of witches and warlocks it might have been, had one judged the scene only from sight. But the voices of the final three, dropped low though they were for the sake of the supposed sleepers, yet had a tone of pleasant converse that belied their impish appearance.

Those voices came to Rachel dreamily, merging their music with the drowsy odors of a spruce pillow. And through them all she heard Tillie and Genesee singing a song of some unlettered Indian poet:

"Lemolo mika tsolo siah polaklie,
Towagh tsee chil-chil siah saghallie.
Mika na chahko?—me sika chil-chil,
Opitsah! mika winapie,
Tsolo!—tso-lo!"

"Wild do I wander, far in the darkness,
Shines bright a sweet star far up above.
Will you not come to me? you are the star,
Sweetheart! I wait,
Lost!—in the dark!"

And the white girl's mouth curled dubiously in that smile that always vanquished the tender curves of her lips, and then dropped asleep whispering the refrain, "*Tsolo—tso-lo!*"

CHAPTER VI.

TSOLO—TSO-LO!

The retracing of steps, either figuratively or literally, is always provocative of thought to the individual who walks again over old paths; the waning of a moon never finds the same state of feelings in the heart that had throbbed through it under the gold sickle. Back over how many a road do we walk with a sigh, remembering the laughter that had once echoed along it! something has been gained, something has been lost, since; and a human sigh is as likely to be called forth by one cause as the other.

Miss Rachel Hardy, who usually laughed at sighs of sentiment, did not indulge in them as one by one the landmarks of the past three weeks rose into sight. But different natures find different vents for feeling, and she may have got rid of hers by the long gallops she took alone over the now known trail, priding herself on her ability to find her way miles ahead of the slower-moving party; and resting herself and horse in some remembered retreat, would await their coming.

Through these solitary rides she began to understand the fascination such a free, untrammeled existence would have for a man. One must feel a very Adam in the midst of this virginity of soil and life of the hills. She had not Tillie's domestic ideas of life, else the thought of an Eve might also have occurred to her. But though she wasted no breath in sighs over the retraced *cultus corrie*, neither did she in the

mockery that had tantalized Clara in the beginning. That lady did not find her self-imposed duty of chaperone nearly so arduous as at first, since, from the time the other ladies awakened to the fact that their guide had a good baritone voice and could be interesting, the girl forgot her role of champion, also her study of mongrel languages; for she dropped that ready use of Chinook of which she had been proud, especially in her conversation with him, and only used it if chance threw her in the way of Indians hunting or gathering *olallie* (berries) in the hills.

Genesee never noticed by word or action the changed manner that dropped him out of her knowledge. Once or twice, in crossing a bit of country that was in any way dangerous to a stranger, he had said no one must leave the party or go out of hearing distance; and though the order was a general one, they all knew he meant Rachel, and the ladies wondered a little if that generally headstrong damsel would heed it, or if she would want willfully to take the bit in her teeth and go as she pleased—a habit of hers; but she did not; she rode demurely with the rest, showing the respect of a soldier to the orders of a commander. Along the last bit of bad country he spoke to her of the enforced care through the jungle of underbrush, where the *chetwoot* (black bear) was likely to be met and prove a dangerous enemy, at places where the trail led along the edge of ravines, and where a fright to a horse was a risky thing.

"It's hard on you, Miss, to be kept back here with the rest of us," he said, half apologetically; "you're too used to riding free for this to be any pleasure, but—"

"Don't distress yourself about me," she answered eas-

ily, but without looking at him. "I have felt a little lazy to-day, so has Betty, and have been satisfied to loaf; but now we are at the edge of this bad strip, and just down over this bend ahead is a long stretch of level, and I think—yes, I am quite sure—I am ready now for a run."

And without waiting to hear either assent or dissent to her intention, she touched Betty with the whip, and Mowitza and her master were left behind, much to Mowitza's dissatisfaction. She gave one plunge ahead as if to follow, but Genesee's hand on the bridle had a quick, cruel grip for a moment, and in slow silence they made their way down the timbered slope to the lower levels. And the girl, free from companionship save her own thoughts, galloped through the odorous, shadowy table-lands, catching here and there a glimpse of glistening water in a river ahead, as it trailed its length far below the plateaus, and shone like linked diamonds away toward the east.

She remembered the river; it was a branch of the Kootenai. To be near it meant but a short journey home; two days more, perhaps, and then—well, their outing would be over. She would go back East, and say good-bye to Betty; and then she began to think of that man who belonged to these hills and who never need leave them—never need go a mile without his horse, if he did not choose; and she envied him as she could not have thought it possible to do six months before—to envy a man such a primitive existence, such simple possessions! But most human wants are so much a matter of association, and Rachel Hardy, though all unconscious of it, was most impressionable to surroundings. Back of her coolness and carelessness was a sensitive temperament in which the pulses

were never stilled. It thrilled her with quick sympathies for which she was vexed with herself, and which she hid as well as she could. She had more than likely never tried to analyze her emotions; they were seldom satisfactory enough for her to grant them so much patience; but had she done so, she would have found her desires molded as much by association and sentiment as most other human nature of her age.

Once or twice she looked back as she got clear of the timber, but could see nothing of the others, and Betty seemed to scent the trail home, and long for the ranch and the white-coated flocks of the pastures, for she struck out over the table-lands, where her hoofs fell so softly in the grass that the wild things of the ground-homes and the birds that rest on the warm earth scampered and flew from under the enemy's feet that were shod with iron. A small herd of elk with uncouth heads and monstrous antlers were startled from the shelter of a knoll around which she cantered; for a moment the natives and the stranger gazed at each other with equal interest, and then a great buck plunged away over the rolling land to the south, and the others followed as if they had been given a word of command.

The girl watched them out of sight, finding them, like the most of Montana natives, strange and interesting—not only the natives, but the very atmosphere of existence, with its tinges of wildness and coloring of the earth; even the rising and setting of the sun had a distinct character of its own, in the rarefied air of this land that seemed so far off from all else in the world. For in the valley of the Kootenai, where the light breaks over the mountains of the east and vanishes again over the mountains of the west, it is hard

at times to realize that its glory is for any land but the mellow, sun-kissed "park" whose only gates open to the south.

The late afternoon was coming on; only an hour or so of sun, and then the long flush twilight.

Remembering the camping-spot they were making for, she gave Betty rein, thinking to reach it and have a fire built on their arrival, and her hard ride gave her a longing for the sight of the pack-mules with the eatables.

Another of those ugly, jolting bits of scrub-timber had to be crossed before the haven of rest was reached. Betty had almost picked her way through it, when a huge black something came scrambling down through the brush almost in front of them. The little mare shied in terror, and the girl tried to make a circuit of the animal, which she could see was an enormous black bear. It did not seem to notice her, but was rolling and pitching downward as if on a trail—no doubt that of honey in a tree. Managing Betty was not an easy matter, and it took all of the girl's strength to do so until the black stranger passed, and then, on loosening the bridle, the terrified beast gave a leap forward. There was a crash, a growl from under her feet, and an answering one from the huge beast that had just gone by them; she had been followed by two cubs that had escaped Rachel's notice in the thick brush, as all her attention had been given to the mother; but Betty's feet coming down on one of the cubs had brought forth a call that the girl knew might mean a war of extermination. With a sharp cut of the whip, Betty, wild from the clawing thing at her feet, sprang forward over it with a snort of terror, just as the mother with fierce growls broke through the brush.

Once clear of them, the little mare ran like mad through the rough trail over which she had picked her way so carefully but a little before. Stones and loose earth clattered down the gully, loosened by her flying feet, and dashed ominously in the mountain stream far below. The girl was almost torn from the saddle by the low branches of the trees under which she was borne. In vain she tried to check or moderate the mare's gait. She could do little but drop low on the saddle and hang there, wondering if she should be able to keep her seat until they got clear of the timber. The swish of some twigs across her eyes half blinded her, and it seemed like an hour went by with Betty crashing through the brush, guiding herself, and seeming to lose none of her fright. Her ears were deaf to the girl's voice, and at last, stumbling in her headlong run, her rider was thrown against a tree, knowing nothing after the sickening jar, and seeing nothing of Betty, who, freed from her burden, recovered her footing, and, triumphant, dashed away on a *cultus* "*coolie*" (run) of her own.

When she recovered her powers of reasoning, she felt too lazy, too tired to use them. She ached all over from the force of the fall, and though realizing that the sun was almost down, and that she was alone there in the timber, all she felt like doing was to drag herself into a more comfortable position and go to sleep; but real sleep did not come easily—only a drowsy stupor, through which she realized she was hungry, and wondered if the rest were eating supper by that time, and if they had found Betty, and if—no, rather, when would they find her?

She had no doubt just yet that they would find her; she could half imagine how carefully and

quickly Mowitza would cover the ground after they missed her. Of course there were other horses in the party, but Mowitza was the only one she happened to think of. She did not know where she was; the mare had struck into a new trail for herself, and had dropped her rider on a timbered slope of one of the foot-hills, where there were no remembered landmarks, and the closeness of night would prevent her from seeking them.

Twice she roused herself and tried to walk, but she was dizzily sick from the wild ride and the fall that had stunned her, and both times she was compelled to drop back on her couch of grass. The stars began to creep out in the clear, warm sky, and up through the timber the shadows grew black, and it all seemed very peaceful and very lovely. She thought she would not mind sleeping there if she only had a blanket, and—yes, some hot coffee—for through the shadows of the lower hills the dew falls quickly, and already the coolness made itself felt with a little shiver. She searched her pocket for some matches—not a match, therefore no fire.

But a sound in the distance diverted her thoughts from disappointment, and she strained her ears for a repetition of it. Surely it was a shot, but too far off for any call of hers to answer it. She could do nothing but listen and wait, and the waiting grew long, so long that she concluded it could be no one on her trail—perhaps some of the Indians in the hills. She would be glad to see even them, she thought, for all she met had seemed kindly disposed.

Then she fell to wondering about that half-breed girl who had hid back of the ponies; was it Genesee she was afraid of, and if so, why?

Suddenly a light gleamed through the woods above her; a bent figure was coming down the hill carrying a torch, and back of it a horse was following slowly.

"Genesee!" called a glad voice through the dusk. "Genesee!"

There was no word in answer; only the form straightened, and with the torch held high above his head he plunged down through the trees, straight as an arrow, in answer to her voice.

She had risen to her feet, but swayed unsteadily as she went to meet him.

"I am so glad—it—is—you," she said, her hands outstretched as he came close. And then that returning dizziness sent her staggering forward, half on her knees and half in his arms, as he threw the torch from him and caught her.

She did not faint, though the only thing she was still conscious of was that she was held in strong arms, and held very closely, and the beat of a heart that was not her own throbbed against her rather nerveless form. He had not yet spoken a word, but his breath coming quickly, brokenly, told of great exhaustion, or it may be excitement.

Opening her eyes, she looked up into the face that had a strange expression in the red light from the torch—his eyes seemed searching her own so curiously

"I—I'm all right," she half smiled in answer to what she thought an unspoken query, "only"— and a wave of forgetfulness crept over the estrangement of the late days—and she added—"only—*Hyas till nika*" (I am very tired).

Her eyes were half closed in the content of being found, and the safety of his presence. She had not

changed her position, nor noticed that he had not spoken. His hat had fallen to the ground, and something almost boyish was in the bend of his bared head and the softness of his features as his face drooped low over her own. Death brings back the curves of youth to aged faces sometimes—is it the only change that does so?

She felt the hand on her shoulder trembling; was it with her weight—and he so strong? A muttered sentence came to her ears, through which she could only distinguish a word that in its suppressed force might belong to either a curse or a prayer — an intense "Christ!"

That aroused her to a realization of what she had been too contented to remember. She opened her eyes and raised her head from his arm, brushing his lips with her hair as she did so.

"Were you so much alarmed?" she asked in a clearer, more matter-of-fact way, as she propped herself up on his outstretched arm; "and did you come alone to find me?"

He drew back from her with a long, indrawn breath, and reached for his hat.

"Yes," he said.

It was the first time he had spoken to her, and he did so with his eyes still on her face and that curious expression in them. He was half kneeling, his body drawn back and away from her, but his eyes unchanging in their steadiness. As the girl lay there full length on the mountain grass, only her head raised and turned toward him, she might have been a Lamia from their attitudes and his expression.

"It seemed long to wait," she continued, turning her eyes toward Mowitza, who had come quietly near them;

"but I was not afraid. I knew you would find me. I would have walked back to meet you if the fall had not made me so dizzy. I am decidedly *wake kloshe*" (no good); and she smiled as she reached out her hand to him, and he helped her rise to her feet. "I feel all jolted to pieces," she said, taking a few steps toward a tree against which she leaned. "And even now that you have come, I don't know how I am to get to camp."

"I will get you there," he answered briefly. "Did the mare throw you?"

"I am not sure what she did," answered the girl. "She fell, I think, and I fell with her, and when I could see trees instead of stars she had recovered and disappeared. Oh! Did you see the bear?"

"Yes, and shot her. She might have killed you when her temper was up over that cub. How did it happen?"

Each of them was a little easier in speech than at first, and she told him as well as she could of the episode, and her own inability to check Betty. And he told her of the fright of the others, and their anxiety, and that he had sent them straight ahead to camp, while he struck into the timber where Betty had left the old trail.

"I promised them to have word of you soon," he added; "and I reckon they'll be mighty glad you can take the word yourself—it's more than they expected. She might have killed you."

His tone and repetition of the words showed the fear that had been uppermost in his thoughts.

"Yes—she might," agreed the girl. "That is a lesson to me for my willfulness;" and then she smiled mockingly with a gleam of her old humor, adding: "And so

in the future, for the sake of my neck and the safety of my bones, I will be most obedient to orders, Mr. Genesee Jack."

He only looked at her across the flickering circle of light from the torch. It must have dazzled his eyes, for in putting on his hat he pulled it rather low over his forehead, and turning his back abruptly on her he walked over for Mowitza.

But he did not bring her at once. He stood with his elbows on her shoulders and his head bent over his clasped hands, like a man who is thinking—or else very tired.

Rachel had again slipped down beside the tree; her head still seemed to spin around a little if she stood long; and from that point of vantage she could easily distinguish the immovable form in the shifting lights and shadows.

"What is the matter with the man?" she asked herself as he stood there. "He was glad to find me—I know it; and why he should deliberately turn his back and walk away like that, I can't see. But he shan't be cool or sulky with me ever again; I won't let him."

And with this determination she said:

"Genesee!"

"Yes," he answered, but did not move.

"Now that you have found me, are you going to leave me here all night?" she asked demurely.

"No, Miss," he answered, and laid his hand on the bridle. "Come, Mowitza, we must take her to camp;" and striding back with quick, decided movements that were rather foreign to his manner, he said:

"Here she is, Miss; can you ride on that saddle?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. I—I—suppose so; but how are you to get there?"

"Walk," he answered concisely.

"Why, how far is it?"

"About five miles—straight across."

"Can we go straight across?"

"No."

She looked up at him and laughed, half vexed.

"Mr. Genesee Jack," she remarked, "you can be one of the most aggravatingly non-committal men I ever met. It has grown as dark as a stack of black cats, and I know we must have an ugly trip to make with only one horse between us. Do you suppose I have no natural curiosity as to how we are to get there, and when? Don't be such a lock-and-key individual. I don't believe it is natural to you. It is an acquired habit, and hides your real self often."

"And a good thing it does, I reckon," he returned; "locks and keys are good things to have, Miss; don't quarrel with mine or my ways to-night; wait till I leave you safe with your folks, then you can find fault or laugh, whichever you please. It won't matter then."

His queer tone kept her from answering at once, and she sat still, watching him adjust the stirrup, and then make a new torch of pine splits and knots.

"What do you call a torch in Chinook?" she asked after a little, venturing on the supposed safe ground of jargon.

"*La gome towagh*," he answered, splitting a withe to bind them together, and using a murderous-looking hunting-knife on which the light glimmered and fretted.

"And a knife?" she added.

'*Opitsah*."

She looked up at him quickly. "*Opitsah* means sweetheart," she returned; "I know that much myself. Are you not getting a little mixed, Professor?"

"I think not," he said, glancing across at her; "the same word is used for both; and," he added, thrusting the knife in its sheath and rising to his feet, "I reckon the men who started the jargon knew what they were talking about, too. Come, are you ready?"

Assuredly, though he had hunted for her, and been glad to find her alive, yet now that he had found her he had no fancy for conversation, and he showed a decided inclination to put a damper on her attempts at it. He lifted her to the saddle, and walking at Mowitza's head, they started on their home journey through the night.

"The moon will be up soon," he remarked, glancing up at the sky. "We only need a torch for the gulch down below there."

She did not answer; the movement of the saddle brought back the dizziness to her head—all the glare of the torch was a blur before her. She closed her eyes, thinking it would pass away, but it did not, and she wondered why he stalked on like that, just as if he did not care, never once looking toward her or noticing how she was dropping forward almost on Mowitza's neck. Then, as they descended a steep bit of hill, she became too much lost to her surroundings for even that speculation, and could only say slowly:

"*Tsolo*, Genesee?"

"No," he answered grimly, "not now."

But she knew or heard nothing of the tone that implied more than it expressed. She could only reach gropingly toward him with one hand, as if to save herself from falling from the saddle. Only her finger-tips touched his shoulder—it might have been a drooping branch out of the many under which they went, for all the weight of it; but grim and unrespon-

sive as he was in some ways, he turned, through some quick sympathy at the touch of her hand, and caught her arm as she was about to fall forward. In an instant she was lifted from the saddle to his feet, and his face was as white as hers as he looked at her.

"Dead!" he said, in a quiet sort of way, as her hand dropped nerveless from his own, and he lifted her in his arms, watching for some show of life in the closed lids and parted lips. And then, with a great shivering breath, he drew the still face to his own, and in a half-motherly way smoothed back the fair hair as if she had been a child, whispering over and over: "Not dead, my pretty! not you, my girl! Here, open your eyes; listen to me; don't leave me like this until I tell you—tell you—God! I wish I was dead beside you! Ah, my girl! my girl!"

CHAPTER VII.

UNDER THE CHINOOK MOON.

Ikt polaklie konaway moxt.

Over the crowns of the far hills the moon wheeled slowly up into the sky, giving the shadows a cloak of blue mist, and vying with the forgotten torch in lighting up the group in the gulch. The night winds rustled through the leaves and sighed through the cedars; and the girl's voice, scarcely louder than the whispers of the wood, said: "Genesee! Tillie!"

"Yes, Miss," the man answered, as he lowered her head from his shoulder to the sward, making a pillow for her of his hat. With returning life and consciousness she slipped again out of his reach or possession, and himself and his emotions were put aside, to be hidden from her eyes.

Through the blessing of death, infinite possession comes to so many souls that life leaves beggared; and in those hurried moments of uncertainty, she belonged to him more fully than he could hope for while she lived.

"Is it you, Genesee?" she said, after looking at him drowsily for a little. "I—I thought Tillie was here, crying, and kissing me."

"No, Miss, you fainted, I reckon, and just dreamed that part of it," he answered, but avoiding the eyes that, though drowsy, looked so directly at him.

"I suppose so," she agreed. "I tried to reach you

when I felt myself going; but you wouldn't look around. Did you catch me?"

"Yes; and I don't think you were quite square with me back there; you told me you were all right; but you must have got hurt more than you owned up to. Why didn't you tell me?"

"But I am not—indeed I am not!" she persisted. "I was not at all injured except for the jar of the fall; it leaves me dizzy and sick when I sit upright in the saddle—that is all."

"And it is enough," he returned decidedly; "do you 'spose, if you'd told me just how you felt, I would have set you there to ride through these hills and hollows?"

"What else could you do?" she asked; "you couldn't bring a carriage for me."

"May be not, but I could have rode Mowitza myself and carried you."

"That would be funny," she smiled. "Poor Mowitza! could she carry double?"

"Yes," he answered curtly; perhaps the situation did not strike him in a humorous light. "Yes, she can, and that's what she will have to do. Let me know when you feel able to start."

"I think I do now," she said, raising herself from the ground; "I am a little shaky, but if I do not have to sit upright I can keep my wits about me, I believe. Will you help me, please?"

He lifted her into the saddle without a word, and then mounting himself, he took her in front of him, circling her with one arm and guiding Mowitza with the other, with as much unconcern as if he had carried damsels in like cavalier fashion all his life.

They rode on in silence for a little through the

shadows of the valley, where the moon's light only fell in patches. His eyes were straight ahead, on the alert for gullies and pitfalls along the blind trail. He seemed to have no glances for the girl whose head was on his shoulder, but whom he held most carefully. Once he asked how she felt, and if she was comfortable; and she said "Yes, thank you," very demurely, with that mocking smile about her lips. She felt like laughing at the whole situation—all the more so because he looked so solemn, almost grim. She always had an insane desire to laugh when in circumstances where any conventional woman would be gathering up her dignity. It had got her into scrapes often, and she felt as if it was likely to do so now. The movement of the horse no longer made her ill, since she did not have to sit upright; she was only a little dizzy at times, as if from the rocking of a swing, and lazily comfortable with that strong arm and shoulder for support.

"I am afraid I am getting heavy," she remarked after a while; "if I could get my arm around back of you and hold either the saddle or reach up to your shoulder, I might not be such a dead weight on your arm."

"Just as you like," was the brief reply that again aroused her desire to laugh. It did seem ridiculous to be forced into a man's arms like that, and the humorous part of it was heightened, in her eyes, by his apparent sulkiness over the turn affairs had taken.

She slipped her arm across his back, however, and up to his shoulder, thus lightening her weight on the arm that circled her, an attempt to which he appeared indifferent. And so they rode on out of the valley into the level land at the foot of the hills, and then

into the old trail where the route was more familiar and not so much care needed.

The girl raised her head drowsily as she noted some old landmarks in the misty light.

"Poor Mowitza!" she said; "she did not have such a load when she came over this road before; it was the day after you joined us, do you remember?"

"Yes."

Remember! It had been the gateway through which he had gained a glimpse into a new world—those days that were tinged with the delightful suggestions of dawn. He smiled rather grimly at the question, but she could not see his face well, under the shadow of his wide hat.

"Has Mowitza ever before had to carry double?"

There was a little wait after her question—perhaps he was trying to remember; then he said:

"Yes."

She wanted to ask who, and under what circumstances, but someway was deterred by his lock-and-key manner, as she called it. She rather commended herself for her good humor under its influence, and wondered that she only felt like laughing at his gruffness. With any other person she would have felt like retaliating, and she lay there looking up into the shadowy face with a mocking self-query as to why he was made an exception of.

"Genesee!" she began, after one of those long spells of silence; and then the utterance of the name suggested a new train of thought—"by the way, is your name Genesee?"

He did not answer at once—was he trying to remember that also?

"I wish you would tell me," she continued, more

gently than was usual with her. "I am going away soon; I would like to know by what real name I am to remember you when I am back in Kentucky. Is your name Jack Genesee?"

"No," he said at last; "Genesee is a name that stuck to me from some mines where I worked, south of this. If I went back to them I would be called Kootenai Jack, perhaps, because I came from here. Plenty of men are known by names out here that would not be recognized at home, if they have a home."

"But your name is Jack?" she persisted.

"Yes, my name is Jack."

But he did not seem inclined to give any further information on the subject that just then was of interest to her, and she did not like to question further, but contented herself with observing:

"I shan't call you Genesee any more."

"Just as you like, Miss."

Again came that crazy desire of hers to laugh, and although she kept silent, it was a convulsive silence—one of heaving bosom and quivering shoulders. To hide it, she moved restlessly, changing her position somewhat, and glancing about her.

"Not much farther to go," she remarked; "won't they be surprised to find you carrying me into camp like this? I wonder if Betty came this way, or if they found her—the little vixen! There is only one more hill to cross until we reach camp—is there not?"

"Only one more."

"And both Mowitza and yourself will need a good rest when we get there," she remarked. "Your arm must feel paralyzed. Do you know, I was just thinking if you had found me dead in that gulch, you would have had to carry me back over this trail, just like

this. Ugh! What a dismal ride, carrying a dead woman!"

His arm closed around her quickly, and he drew a deep breath as he looked at her.

"I don't know," he said in a terse way, as if through shut teeth; "perhaps it wouldn't have been so dismal, for I might never have come back. I might have staid there—with you."

She could see his eyes plainly enough when he looked at her like that; even the shadows could not cover their warmth; they left little to be expressed in words, and neither attempted any. Her face turned away from him a little, but her hand slipped into the clasp of his fingers, and so they rode on in silence.

The brow of the last hill was reached. Down below them could be seen the faint light from the camp-fire, and for an instant Mowitza was halted for a breathing-spell ere she began the descent. The girl glanced down toward the fire-light, and then up to his face.

"You can rest now," she said, with the old quizzical smile about her lips, even while her fingers closed on his own. "There is the camp; *alta nika wake tsolo*" (now you no longer wander in the dark).

But there was no answering smile on his face—not even at the pleasure of the language that at times had seemed a tacit bond between them. He only looked at her in the curious way she had grown accustomed to in him, and said:

"The light down there is for you; I don't belong to it. Just try and remember that after—after you are safe with your folks."

"I shall remember a great deal," returned the girl in her independent tone; "among other things, the man

who brought me back to them. Now, why don't you say, 'Just as you like, Miss?' You ought to—to be natural."

But her raillery brought no more words from him. His face had again its sombre, serious look, and in silence he guided Mowitza's feet down toward the glowing light. Once a puff of wind sent the girl's hair blowing across her face, and he smoothed it back carefully that he might see her eyes in the moonlight; but the half-caress in the movement was as if given to a child. All the quick warmth was gone from his eyes and speech after that one comprehensive outbreak, and the girl was puzzled at the change that had come in its stead. He was so gentle, but so guarded—the touch even of his fingers on her shoulder was tremulous, as if with the weight of resistance forced into them. She did not feel like laughing any longer, after they began the descent of the hill. His manner had impressed her too strongly with the feeling of some change to come with the end of that ride and the fraughtful moonlight night, and no words came to her; but her hand remained in his of its own accord, not because it was held there, and she lay very quiet, wondering if he would not speak—would say nothing more to her ere they joined the others, to whom they were moving nearer at every step.

But he did not. Once his fingers closed convulsively over her own. His eyes straight ahead caused her to glance in that direction, and she saw Tillie and Hardy clearly, in the moonlight, walking together hand-in-hand down toward the glow of the camp-fire. On a ledge of rock that jutted out clear from the shadowy brush, they lingered for an instant. The soft blue light and the silence made them look a lit-

tle ghostly—a tryst of spirits—as the tall shoulders drooped forward with circling arms into which Tillie crept, reaching upward until their faces met. The eyes of those two on horseback turned involuntarily toward each other at the sight of those married lovers, but there was no echo of a caress in their own movements, unless it was the caress of a glance; and in a few moments more they were within speaking distance of the camp.

"We are here," he said slowly, as Hardy and his wife, hearing the steps of the horse, hurried toward them.

"Yes, I know," she whispered.

It was their good-bye to the night.

A neigh from the renegade Betty was answered by Mowitza, and in an instant all the group about the camp was alive to the fact of the return. But the eager questions received few answers, for Genesee handed Rachel into the arms of Hardy, and said to Tillie:

"Don't let them pester her with questions to-night, Mrs. Hardy. She has no injuries, I guess, only she's used up and needs rest bad. I found her ready to faint in a gulch back from the trail about three miles. She'll be all right to-morrow, I reckon; only see that she gets a good rest and isn't bothered to-night."

No need to tell them that. Their gladness at her safe return made them all consideration.

Genesee and Mowitza also came in for a share of their solicitude, and the former for a quantity of thanks that met with rather brusque response.

"That's nothing to thank a man for," he said a little impatiently, as the Houghtons were contributing their

share. "I reckon you don't know much about the duties of a scout or guide in this country, or you would know it was my business to go for the lady—just as it would be to hunt up lost stock, if any had strayed off. There wasn't much of a trick in finding her—Betty left too clear a trail; and I reckon it's time we all turned in to sleep instead of talking about it."

In the morning Rachel awoke refreshed and expectant in a vague way. The incidents of the night before came crowding to her memory, sending the blood tingling through her veins as she thought of their meeting; of the ride; of those few significant words of his, and his face as he had spoken. She wondered at herself accepting it all so dreamily—as if in a lethargy. She was far from a stupor at the thought of it in the light of the early day, as she watched the blue mists rising up, up, from the valleys. Was he watching them too? Was he thinking as she was of that ride and its revelations? Would he meet her again with that queer, distant manner of his? Would he—

Her ruminations were cut short by Tillie, who thought to awaken her with the proffer of a hot cup of coffee, and who was surprised to find her awake.

"Yes, I am awake, and hungry, too," she said briskly; "you did not give me near enough to eat last night. Is breakfast all ready? I wonder how poor Mowitza is this morning after her heavy load. Say, Tillie, did we look altogether ridiculous?"

"No, you did not," said Tillie stoutly. "It was wonderfully kind of him to bring you so carefully. I always said he had a great deal of heart in him; but he is gone, already."

"Gone!—where?" And the cup of coffee was set on

the grass as if the hunger and thirst were forgotten. "Where?"

"We don't know," said Tillie helplessly. "Clara says back to his tribe; but she always has something like that to say of him. It's the queerest thing; even Hen is puzzled. He was wakened this morning about dawn by Genesee, who told him his time was up with the party; that we could follow the trail alone well enough now; and that he had to join some Indian hunters away north of this to-night, so had to make an early start. I guess he forgot to speak of it last night, or else was too tired. He left a good-bye for Hen to deliver for him to the rest of us, and a *klahowya* to you."

"Did he?" asked the girl with a queer little laugh. "That was thoughtful of him. May his hunting be prosperous and his findings be great."

"Dear me!" said Tillie weakly, "you are just as careless about it as Clara, and I *did* think you would be sorry to lose him. I am, and so is Hen; but evidently persuasions were of no avail. He said he could not even wait for breakfast; that he should have gone last night. And the queerest thing about it is that he utterly refused any money from Hen, on the plea that the whole affair had been a pleasure ride, not work at all; and so—he is gone."

"And so—he is gone," said the girl, mimicking her tone; "what a tragical manner over a very prosaic circumstance! Tillie, my child, don't be so impressible, or I shall have to tell Hen that our guide has taken your affections in lieu of greenbacks."

"Rachel!"

"Matilda!" said the other mildly, looking teasingly over the rim of the coffee-cup she was slowly

emptying. "Don't startle me with that tone before breakfast, and don't grieve over the exodus of Mr. Genesee Jack. I shall take on my own shoulders the duties of guide in his stead, so you need not worry about getting home safe; and in the meantime I am wofully hungry."

She was still a little dizzy as she rose to her feet, and very stiff and sore from her ride; but, joking over her rheumatic joints, she limped over to where the breakfast was spread on a flat rock.

"There is one way in which I may not be able to take Mr. Genesee Jack's place, in your estimation," she said lowly to Tillie as they were about to join the others. "I shall not be able to tell you stories of Indian conjurors or sing you Indian love-songs. I can't do anything but whistle."

"Hen, she wasn't the least bit interested about him leaving like that!" said Tillie confidentially to her husband a few hours later. "She never does seem to have much feeling for anything; but after him bringing her back so carefully, and after the chumminess there was between them for a while, one would naturally think—"

"Of course one would," agreed her husband laughingly, "especially if one was an affectionate, matchmaking little person like yourself, and altogether a woman. But Rache—" and his glance wandered ahead to where the slim figure of the girl was seen stubbornly upright on Betty—"well, Rache never was like the rest of the girls at home, and I fancy she will never understand much of the sentimental side of life. She is too level-headed and practical."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STORM—AND AFTER.

Olapitski yakka skips.

Two weeks later storm-clouds were flying low over the Kootenai hills and chasing shadows over the faces of two equestrians who looked at each other in comic dismay.

"Jim, we are lost!" stated the one briefly.

"I allow we are, Miss Hardy," answered the other, a boy of about fifteen, who gazed rather dubiously back over the way they had come and ahead where a half-blind trail led up along the mountain.

"Suppose we pitch pennies to see what direction to take," suggested the girl; but the boy only laughed.

"Haven't much time for that, Miss," he answered. "Look how them clouds is crowdin' us; we've got to hunt cover or get soaked. This trail goes somewhere; may be to an Injun village. I allow we'd better freeze to it."

"All right. We'll allow that we had," agreed Miss Hardy. "Betty, get around here, and get up this hill! I know every step is taking us farther from the ranch, but this seems the only direction in which a trail leads. Jim, how far do you suppose we are from home?"

"'Bout fifteen miles, I guess," said the boy, looking blue.

"And we haven't found the lost sheep?"

"No, we haven't."

"And we have got lost?"

"Yes."

"Jim, I don't believe we are a howling success as sheep farmers."

"I don't care a darn about the sheep just now," declared Jim. "What I want to know is where we are to sleep to-night."

"Oh, you want too much," she answered briskly; "I am content to sit up all night, if I only can find a dry place to stay in—do you hear that?" as the thunder that had grumbled in the distance now sounded its threats close above them.

"Yes, I hear it, and it means business, too! I wish we were at the end of this trail," he said, urging his horse up through the scrubby growth of laurel.

The darkness was falling so quickly that it was not an easy matter to keep the trail; and the wind hissing through the trees made an open space a thing to wish for. Jim, who was ahead, gave a shout as he reached the summit of the hill where the trail crossed it.

"We're right!" he yelled that she might hear his voice above the thunders and the wind; "there's some sort of a shanty across there by a big pond; it's half a mile away, an' the rain's a-comin'—come on!"

And on they went in a wild run to keep ahead of the rain-cloud that was pelting its load at them with the force of hail. The girl had caught a glimpse of the white sheen of a lake or pond ahead of them; the shanty she did not wait to pick out from the gloom, but followed blindly after Jim, at a breakneck gait, until they both brought up short, in the shadow of a cabin in the edge of the timber above the lake.

"Jump off quick and in with you!" called Jim; and

without the ceremony of knocking, she pushed open the door and dived into the interior.

It was almost as dark as night. She stumbled around until she found a sort of bed in one corner, and sat down on it, breathless and wet. The rain was coming down in torrents, and directly Jim, with the saddles in his arms, came plunging in, shaking himself like a water-spaniel.

"Great guns! But it's comin' down solid," he gasped; "where are you?"

"Here—I've found a bed, so somebody lives here. Have you any matches?"

"I allow I have," answered Jim, "if they only ain't wet—no, by George, they're all right."

The brief blaze of the match showed him the fire-place and a pile of wood beside it, and a great osier basket of broken bark. "Say, Miss Hardy, we've struck great luck," he announced while on his knees, quickly starting a fire and fanning it into a blaze with his hat; "I wonder who lives here and where they are. Stickin' to that old trail was a pay streak —hey?"

In the blaze of the fire the room assumed quite a respectable appearance. It was not a shanty, as Jim had at first supposed, but a substantial log-cabin, furnished in a way to show constant and recent occupation.

A table made like a wide shelf jutted from the wall under the one square window; a bed and two chairs that bespoke home manufacture were covered by bear-skins; on the floor beside the bed was a buffalo-robe; and a large locked chest stood against the wall. Beside the fire-place was a cupboard with cooking and table utensils, and around the walls hung trophies of the hunt. A bow and quiver of arrows and

a knotted silken sash hung on one wooden peg, and added to a pair of moccasins in the corner, gave an Indian suggestion to the occupancy of the cabin, but the furnishing in general was decidedly that of a white person; to the rafters were fastened some beaver-paws and bear-claws, and the skins of three rattle-snakes were pendent against the wall.

"Well, this is a queer go! ain't it?" remarked Jim as he walked around taking a survey of the room. "I'd like to know who it all belongs to. Did you ever hear folks about here speak of old Davy MacDougall?"

"Yes, I have," answered the girl, sitting down on the buffalo-robe before the fire, to dry her shoulders at the blaze.

"Well, I believe this is his cabin, and we are about ten mile from home," decided the boy. "I didn't think we'd strayed as far north as Scot's Mountain, but I allow this is it."

"Well, I wish he would come home and get supper," said the girl, easily adapting herself to any groove into which she happened to fall; "but perhaps we should have sent him word of our visit. What did you do with the horses, Jim?"

"Put 'em in a shed at the end o' the house—a bang-up place, right on the other side o' this fireplace. Whoever lives here keeps either a horse or a cow."

"I hope it's a cow, and that there's some milk to be had. Jimmy, I wonder if there is anything to eat in that cupboard."

"I've been thinkin' o' that myself," said Jim in answer to that insinuating speech.

"Suppose you do something besides think—suppose

you look," suggested the more unscrupulous of the foragers; "I'm hungry."

"So am I," acknowledged her confederate; "you an' me is most alike about our eatin', ain't we? Mrs. Houghton said yesterday I had a terrible appetite."

And the boy at once began making an examination of the larder, wondering, as he did so, what the girl was laughing at.

The rain was coming down in torrents through the blackness of the night; now and then the lightning would vie with the fire in lighting up the room, while the thunder seemed at home in that valley of the mountain, for its volleys of sound and their echoes never ceased.

Small wonder that anyone's house would seem a home to the two, or that they would have no compunction in taking possession of it.

"There's coffee here somewhere, I can smell it," announced Jim; "an' here's rice an' crackers, an' cornmeal, an' dried raspberries, an' potatoes, an'—yes, here's the coffee! Say, Miss Hardy, we'll have a regular feast!"

"I should say so!" remarked that lady, eying Jim's "find" approvingly; "I think there is a bed of coals here at this side of the fire-place that will just fit about six of those potatoes—can you eat three, Jim?"

"Three will do if they're big enough," said Jim, looking dubiously at the potatoes; "but these ain't as good-sized as some I've seen."

"Then give me two more; that makes five for you and three for me."

"Hadn't you better shove in a couple more?" asked Jim with a dash of liberality. "You know MacDougall

may come back hungry, an' then we can spare him two —that makes ten to roast."

"Ten it is!" said the girl, burying two more in the ashes as the share of their host. "Jim, see if there is any water in here to make coffee with."

"Yes, a big jar full," reported the steward; "an' here is a little crock half full of eggs—prairie-chicken, I guess—say, can you make a pone?"

"I think I can;" and the cook at once rolled up the sleeves of her riding-dress, and Jimmy brought out the eggs and some bits of salt meat—evidently bear-meat—that was hung from the ceiling of the cupboard; and at once there began a great beating of eggs and stirring up of a corn pone; and some berries were set on the coals to stew in a tin-cup, and the water put to boil for the coffee, and an iron skillet with a lid utilized as an oven; and the fragrance of the preparing eatables filled the little room and prompted the hungry lifting of lids many times ere the fire had time to do its work.

"That pone's a 'dandy!'" said Jim, taking a peep at it; "it's gettin' as brown as—as your hair; an' them berries is done, an' ain't it time to put in the coffee?"

Acting on this hint, the coffee, beaten into a froth with an egg, had the boiling water poured over it, and set bubbling and aromatic on the red coals.

"You mayn't be much use to find strayed-off stock," said Jim deliberately, with his head on one side, as he watched the apparent ease with which the girl managed her primitive cooking apparatus; "but I tell you—you ain't no slouch when it comes to gettin' grub ready, and gettin' it quick."

"Better keep your compliments until you have tried to eat some of the cooking," suggested Miss

Hardy, on her knees before the fire. "I believe the pone is done."

"Then we'll dish-up in double-quick," said Jim, handing her two tin pans for the pone and potatoes. "We'll have to set the berries on in the tin—by George! what's that?"

"That" was the neigh of Betty in the shed by the chimney, and an answering one from somewhere out in the darkness. Through the thunder and the rain they had heard no steps, but Jim's eyes were big with suspense as he listened.

"My horse has broke loose from the shed," he said angrily, reaching for his hat; "and how the dickens I'm to find him in this storm I don't know."

"Don't be so quick to give yourself a shower-bath," suggested the girl on the floor; "he won't stray far off, and may be glad to come back to the shed; and then again," she added, laughing, "it may be MacDougall."

Jim looked rather blankly at the supper on the hearth and the girl who seemed so much at home on the buffalo-robe.

"By George! it might be," he said slowly; and for the first time the responsibility of their confiscations loomed up before him. "Say," he added uneasily, "have you any money?"

"Money?" she repeated inquiringly; and then seeing the drift of his thoughts, "Oh, no, I haven't a cent."

"They say MacDougall is an old crank," he insinuated, looking at her out of the corner of his eye, to see what effect the statement would have on her. But she only smiled in an indifferent way. "An'—an' ef he wants the money cash down for this lay-out"—and he glanced comprehensively over the hearth—"well, I don't know what to say."

"That's easily managed," said the girl coolly; "you can leave your horse in pawn."

"An' foot it home ten miles?—not if I know it!" burst out Jim; "an' besides it's Hardy's horse."

"Well, then, leave the saddle, and ride home bareback."

"I guess not!" protested Jim, with the same aggressive tone; "that's my own saddle."

After this unanswerable reason, there was an expectant silence in the room for a little while, that was finally broken by Jim saying ruefully:

"If that is MacDougall, he'll have to have them two potatoes."

Rachel's risible tendencies were not proof against this final fear of Jim's, and her laughter drowned his grumblings, and also footsteps without, of which neither heard a sound until the door was flung open and a man walked into the room.

Jim looked at him with surprised eyes, and managed to stammer, "How are you?" for the man was so far from his idea of old Davy MacDougall that he was staggered.

But Miss Hardy only looked up, laughing, from her position by the fire, and drew the coffee-pot from the coals with one hand, while she reached the other to the new-comer.

"*Klahowya!* Mr. Jack," she said easily; "got wet, didn't you? You've just got here in time for supper."

"You!" was all he said; and Jim thought they were both crazy, by the way the man got across the room to her and took her one hand in both his as if he never intended letting it go or saying another word, content only to hold her hands and look at her. And Miss Rachel Hardy's eyes were not idle either.

"Yes, of course it's I," she said, slipping her hand away after a little, and dropping her face that had flushed pink in the firelight; "I don't look like a ghost, do I? You would not find a ghost at such prosaic work as getting supper."

"Getting supper?" he said, stepping back a bit and glancing around. For the first time he seemed to notice Jim, or have any remembrance of anything but the girl herself. "You mean that you two have been getting supper alone?"

"Yes, Jim and I. Mr. Jack, this is my friend Jim, from the ranch. We tried to guide each other after sheep, and both got lost; and as you did not get here in time to cook supper, of course we had to get it alone."

"But I mean was there no one else here?"—he still looked a little dazed and perplexed, his eyes roving uneasily about the room—"I—a—a young Indian—"

"No!" interrupted the girl eagerly. "Do you mean the Indian boy who brought me that black bear's skin? I knew you had sent it, though he would not say a word—looked at me as if he did not understand Chinook when I spoke."

"May be he didn't understand yours," remarked Jimmy, edging past her to rake the potatoes out of the ashes.

"But he wasn't here when we came," continued Miss Hardy. "The house was deserted and in darkness when we found it, just as the storm came on in earnest."

"And the fire?" said Genesee.

"There was none," answered the boy. "The ashes were stone-cold. I noticed it; so your Injun hadn't had any fire all day."

"All day!" repeated the man, going to the door and

looking out. "That means a long tramp, and to-night—"

"And to-night is a bad one for a tramp back," added Jim.

"Yes," agreed Genesee, "that's what I was thinking."

If there was a breath of relief in the words, both were too occupied with the potatoes in the ashes to notice it. Directly he shut the door as the wind sent a gust of rain inside, and then turned again to the pirates at the fire-place.

"What did you find to cook?" he asked, glancing at the "lay-out," as Jim called it. "I haven't been here since yesterday, and am afraid you didn't find much—any fresh meat?"

Miss Hardy shook her head.

"Salt meat and eggs, that's all," she said.

"Not by a long shot it ain't, Mr.—Mr. Jack," said Jim, contradicting her flatly. "She's got a first-class supper; an' by George! she can make more out o' nothin' than any woman I ever seen." In his enthusiasm over Rachel he was unconscious of the slur on their host's larder. "I never knowed she was such a rattlin' cook!"

"I know I have never been given credit for my every-day, wearing qualities," said the girl, without looking up from the eggs she was scrambling in the bake-oven of a few minutes before. The words may have been to Jim, but by the man's eyes he evidently thought they were at Genesee—such a curious, pained look as that with which he watched her every movement, every curve of form and feature, that shone in the light of the fire. Once she saw the look, and her own eyes dropped under it for a moment, but that independence of hers would not let it be for long.

"Do you want a share of our supper?" she asked, looking up at him quizzically.

"Yes," he answered, but his steady, curious gaze at her showed that his thoughts were not of the question or answer.

Not so Jim. That young gentleman eyed dubiously first the lay-out and then Genesee's physique, trying to arrive at a mental estimate of his capacity and the probable division of the pone and potatoes.

"How about that saddle, now, Jim?" asked the girl. Whereupon Jim began a pantomime enjoining silence, back of the chair of the man, who appeared more like a guest than host—perhaps because it was so hard to realize that it was really his hearth where that girl sat as if at home. She noticed his preoccupation, and remarked dryly:

"You really don't deserve a share of our cooking after the way you deserted us before!—not even a *klahowya* when you took the trail."

"You're right, I reckon; but don't you be the one to blame me for that," he answered, in a tone that made the command a sort of plea; and Miss Hardy industriously gave her attention to the supper.

"It's all ready," announced Jim, as he juggled a pan of hot pone from one hand to another on the way to the table. "Ouch! but it's hot! Say, wouldn't some fresh butter go great with this!"

"Didn't you find any?" asked Genesee, waking to the practical things of life at Jim's remark.

"Find any? No! Is there any?" asked that little gormand, with hope and doubt chasing each other over his rather thin face.

"I don't know—there ought to be;" and lifting a loose board in the floor by the cupboard, he drew forth a

closely-woven reed basket, and on a smooth stone in the bottom lay a large piece of yellow butter, around which Jim performed a sort of dance of adoration.

What a supper that was, in the light of the pitch-pine and the fierce accompaniment of the outside tempest! Jim vowed that never were there potatoes so near perfection, in their brown jackets and their steaming, powdery flakes; and the yellow pone, and the amber coffee, and the cool slices of butter that Genesee told them was from an Indian village thirty miles north. And to the table were brought such tremendous appetites! at least by the cook and steward of the party. And above all, what a delicious atmosphere of unreality pervaded the whole thing! Again and again Genesee's eyes seemed to say, "Can it be you?" and grew warm as her quizzical glances told him it could be no one else.

And as the night wore on, and the storm continued, he brought in armfuls of wood from the shed without, and in the talk round the fire his manner grew more assured—more at home with the surroundings that were yet his own. Long they talked, until Jim, unable to think of any more questions to ask of silver-mining and bear-hunting, slipped down in the corner, with his head on a saddle, and went fast asleep.

"I'll sit up and keep the fire going," said Genesee, at this sign of the late hour; "but you had better get what rest you can on that bunk there—you'll need it for your ride in the morning."

"In the morning!" repeated the girl coolly; "that sounds as if you are determined our visit shall end as soon as possible, Mr. Genesee Jack."

"Don't talk like that!" he said, looking across at her; "you don't know anything about it." And getting

up hastily, he walked back and forward across the room; once stopping suddenly, as if with some determination to speak, and then, as she looked up at him, his courage seemed to vanish, and he turned his face away from her and walked to the door.

The storm had stilled its shrieks, and was dying away in misty moans down the dip in the hills, taking the rain with it. The darkness was intense as he held the door open and looked into the black vault, where not a glimmer of a star or even a gray cloud could be seen.

"It's much nicer in-doors," decided Miss Hardy, moving her chair against the chimney-piece, and propping herself there to rest.

"Jim had better lie on the bed, he is so sleepy, and I am not at all so; this chair is good enough for me, if you don't mind."

He picked the sleeping boy up without a word, and laid him on the couch of bear-skins without waking him.

"There ain't much I do mind," he said, as he came back to the fire-place; "that is, if you are only comfortable."

"I am—very much so," she answered, "and would be so entirely if you only seemed a little more at home. As it is, I have felt all evening as if we are upsetting your peace of mind in some way—not as if we are unwelcome, mind you, but just as if you are worried about us."

"That so?" he queried, not looking at her; "that's curious. I didn't know I was looking so, and I'm sure you and the boy are mighty welcome to my cabin or anything in the world I can do for you."

There was no mistaking the heartiness of the man's

words, and she smiled her gratitude from the niche in the corner, where, with her back toward the blaze, only one side of her face was outlined by the light.

"Very well," she said amicably; "you can do something for me just now—open the door for a little while; the room seems close with being shut up so tight from the rain—and then make yourself comfortable there on that buffalo-robe before the fire. I remember your lounging habits in camp, and a chair don't seem to quite suit you. Yes, that looks much better, as if you were at home again."

Stretched on the robe, with her saddle on which to prop up his shoulders, he lay, looking in the red coals, as if forgetful of her speech or herself. But at last he repeated her words:

"At home again! Do you know there's a big lot of meaning in them words, Miss, especially to a man who hasn't known what home meant for years? and to-night, with white people in my cabin and a white woman to make things look natural, I tell you it makes me remember what home used to be, in a way I have not seen for many a day."

"Then I'm glad I strayed off into the storm and your cabin," said the girl promptly; "because a man shouldn't forget his home and home-folks, especially if the memories would be good ones. People need all the good memories they can keep with them in this world; they're a sort of steering apparatus in a life-boat, and help a man make a straight journey toward his future."

"That's so," he said, and put his hand up over his eyes as if to shield them from the heat of the fire. He was lying full in the light, while she was in the shadow. He could scarcely see her features, with her

head drawn back against the wall like that. And the very fact of knowing herself almost unseen—a voice, only, speaking to him—gave her courage to say things as she could not have said them at another time.

"Do you know," she said, as she sat there watching him with his eyes covered by his hand—"do you know that once or twice when we have been together I have wished I was a man, that I could say some things to you that a woman or a girl—that is, most girls—can't say very well? One of the things is that I would be glad to hear of you getting out of this life here; there is something wrong about it to you—something that doesn't suit you; I don't know what it is, but I can see you are not the man you might be—and ought to be. I've thought of it often since I saw you last, and sometimes—yes—I've been sorry for my ugly manner toward you. White people, when they meet in these out-of-the-way places in the world, ought to be as so many brothers and sisters to each other; and there were times, often, when I might have helped you to feel more at home among us—when I might have been more kind."

"More kind? Good God!" whispered the man.

"And I made up my mind," continued the girl courageously, "that if I ever saw you again, I was going to speak plainly to you about yourself and dissatisfaction with yourself that you spoke of that day in the laurel thicket. I don't know what the cause of it is, and I don't want to, but if it is any wrong that you've done in—in the past, a bad way to atone is by burying oneself alive, along with all energy and ambition. Now, you may think me presuming to say these things to you like this; but I've been wishing some-

body would say them to you, and there seems no one here to do it but me, and so—"

She stopped, not so much because she had finished as that she felt herself failing utterly in saying the things she had really intended to say. It all sounded very flat and commonplace in her own ears—not at all the words to carry any influence to anyone, and so she had stopped helplessly and looked at him.

"I'm glad it is you that says them," he answered, still without looking at her, "because you've got the stuff in you for such a good, square friend to a man—the sort of woman a person could go to in trouble, even if they hadn't the passport of a saint to take with them; and I wish—I wish I could tell you to-night something of the things that you've started on. If I could—" he stopped a moment.

"I suppose any other girl—" she began in a deprecating tone; but he dropped his hand from his eyes and looked at her.

"You're not like other girls," he said with a great fondness in his eyes, "and that's just the reason I feel like telling you all. You're not like any girl I've ever known. I've often felt like speaking to you as if you were a boy—an almighty aggravatin' slip of a boy sometimes; and yet—"

He lay silent for a little while, so long that the girl wondered if he had forgotten what he was to try and tell her. The warmth after the rain had made them neglect the fire, and its blaze had dropped low and lower, until she was entirely in the shadow—only across the hearth and his form did the light fall.

"And yet," he continued, as if there had been no break in his speech, "there's been so many a night I've dreamed of seeing you sit here by this fire-place

just as I've seen you to-night; just as bright like and contented, as if all the roughness and poorness of it was nothing to you, or else a big joke for you to make fun of; and then—well, them times you didn't seem like a boy, but—"

Again he stopped.

"Never mind what I'm like," suggested the girl; "that don't matter. I guess everyone is a different person with different people; but you wanted to tell me something of yourself, didn't you?"

"That's what I'm trying to get at," he answered, "but it ain't easy. I've got to go back so far to start at the beginning—back ten years, to reckon up mistakes. That's a big job, my girl—my girl."

The lingering repetition of those words opened the girl's eyes wide with a sudden memory of that moonlit night in the gulch. Then she had not fancied those whispered words! they had been uttered, and by his voice; and those fancied tears of Tillie's, and—the kisses!

So thick came those thronging memories, that she did not notice his long, dreamy silence. She was thinking of that night, and all the sweet, vague suggestion in it that had vanished with the new day. She was comparing its brief charm with this meeting of to-night that was ignoring it so effectually; that was as the beginning of a new knowledge of each other, with the commonplace and practical as a basis.

Her reverie was broken sharply by the sight of a form that suddenly, silently, appeared in the doorway. Her first impulse of movement or speech was checked as the faint, flickering light shifted across the visage of the new-comer, and she recognized the Indian girl who had hidden behind the ponies. A

smile was on the dark face as she saw Genesee lying there, asleep he must have looked from the door, and utterly oblivious of her entrance. Her soft moccasins left no sound as she crossed the floor and dropped down beside him, laying one arm about his throat. He clasped the hand quickly and opened his half-shut eyes. Did he, for an instant, mistake it for another hand that had slipped into his that one night? Whatever he thought, his face was like that of death as he met the eyes of the Indian girl.

"Talapa!" he muttered, and his fingers closing on her wrist must have twisted it painfully, by the quick change in her half-Indian, half-French face. He seemed hardly conscious of it. Just then he looked at her as if she was in reality that Indian deity of the inferno from whom her name was derived.

"*Hyak nika kelapie!*" (I returned quickly), she whined, as if puzzled at her reception, and darting furious sidelong glances from the black eyes that had the width between them that is given to serpents. "*Nah!*" she ejaculated angrily, as no answer was made to her; and freeing her hand, she rose to her feet. She had not once seen the white girl in the shadow. Coming from the darkness into the light, her eyes were blinded to all but the one plainly seen figure. But as she rose to her feet, and Genesee with her, Rachel stooped to the pile of wood beside her, and throwing some bits of pine on the fire, sent the sparks flying upward, and a second later a blaze of light flooded the room.

The action was a natural, self-possessed one—it took a great deal to upset Miss Hardy's equanimity—and she coolly sat down again facing the astonished Indian girl and Genesee; but her face was very white, though she said not a word.

"There is no need for me to try and remember the beginning, is there," said Genesee bitterly, looking at her with sombre, moody eyes, "since the end has told its own story? This is—my—my—"

Did he say wife? She never could be quite sure of the word, but she knew he tried to say it.

His voice sounded smothered, unnatural, as it had that day in the laurel thicket when he had spoken of locking himself out from a heaven. She understood what he meant now.

"No, there is no need," she said, as quietly as she could, though her heart seemed choking her and her hands trembled. "I hope all will come right for you sometime, and—I understand now."

Did she really understand, even then, or know the moral lie the man had told, that yet, in his abasement, he felt was easier to have her believe than the truth?

Talapa stood drying her moccasins at the fire, as if not understanding their words; but the slow, cunning smile crept back to her lips as she recognized the white girl, and no doubt remembered that she and Genesee had ridden together that day at the camp.

He picked up his hat and walked to the door, after her kindly words, putting his hand out ahead of him in a blind sort of way, and then stopped, saying to her gently:

"Get what rest you can—try to, anyway; you will need it." And then, with some words in Indian to Talapa, he went out into the night.

His words to Talapa were of their guests comfort, for that silent individual at once began preparations for bed-making on her behalf, until Rachel told her in Chinook that she would sleep where she was,

in the chair. And there she sat through the night, feeling that the eyes of the Indian girl were never taken from her as the motionless form lay rolled in a blanket on the floor, much as it had rolled itself up on the grass that other day.

Jim was throned in royal state, for he had the bed all to himself, and in the morning opened his eyes in amazement as he smelled the coffee and saw the Indian girl moving about as if at home.

"Yes, we've got a new cook, Jim," said Miss Hardy, from the window; "so we are out of work, you and I. Sleep good?"

"Great!" said Jim, yawning widely. "Where's Mr. Jack?"

"Out, somewhere," returned the girl comprehensively. She did not add that he had been out all night, and Jim was too much interested with the prospect of breakfast to be very curious.

He had it, as he had the bed—all to himself. Miss Hardy was not hungry, for a wonder, and Talapa disappeared after it was placed on the table. The girl asked Jim if that was Indian etiquette, but Jim didn't know what etiquette was, so he couldn't tell.

Through that long vigil of the night there had returned to the girl much of her light, ironical manner; but the mockery was more of herself and her own emotions than aught else, for when Genesee brought the horses to the door and she looked in his face, any thought of jesting with him was impossible; the signs of a storm were on him as they were on the mountains in the morning light.

"I will guide you back to the home trail," he said, as he held Betty at the door for her to mount.

"Go in and get some breakfast," was all the answer

she made him. But he shook his head, and reached his hand to help her.

"What's the matter with everyone this morning?" asked Jim. "There hasn't been a bite of breakfast eaten only what I got away with myself."

Genesee glanced in at the table. "Would you eat nothing because it was mine?" he asked lowly.

"I did not because I could not," she said in the same tone; and then added, good-humoredly: "Despite Jim's belief in my appetite, it does go back on me sometimes—and this is one of the times. It's too early in the morning for breakfast. Are you going with us on foot?" as she noticed Mowitza, unsaddled, grazing about the green turf at the edge of the timber.

"Yes," he answered, "I have not far to go."

She slipped past him, and gathering her dress up from the wet grass, walked over to where Mowitza browsed. The beautiful mare raised her head and came over the grass with long, light steps, as if recognizing the low call of her visitor; and resting her head on the girl's shoulder, there seemed to be a conversation between them perfectly satisfactory to each; while Mowitza's owner stood looking at them with a world of conflicting emotions in his face.

"I have been saying good-bye to Mowitza," she remarked, as she rejoined them and mounted Betty, "and we are both disconsolate. She carried me out of danger once, and I am slow to forget a favor."

It was a very matter-of-fact statement; she was a matter-of-fact young woman that morning. But Genesee felt that she was trying to let him know her memory would keep only the best of her knowledge of him. It was an added debt to that which he already

owed her, and he walked in silence at her horse's head, finding no words to express his thoughts, and not daring to use them if he had.

The valleys were wrapped in the whitest of mists as they got a glimpse of them from the heights. The sun was struggling through one veil only to be plunged into another, and all the cedar wood was in the drip, drip of tears that follow tempests. Where was all that glory of the east at sunrise which those two had once watched from a mountain not far from this? In the east, as they looked now, there were only faint streaks of lavender across the sky—of lavender the color of mourning.

He directed Jim the way of the trail, and then turned to her.

"I don't know what to say to you—or just how low you will think me," he said in a miserable sort of way. "When I think of—of some things, I wonder that you even speak to me this morning—God! I'm ashamed to look you in the face!"

And he looked it. All the cool assurance was gone that had been a prominent phase of his personality that evening when Hardy met him first. His handsome, careless face and the independent head were drooped before hers as his broad-brimmed hat was pulled a little lower over his eyes.

Some women are curious, and this one, whom he had thought unlike all others, rather justified his belief, as she bent over in the saddle and lifted the cover from his dark hair.

"Don't be!" she said gently—and as he looked up at her she held out her hand—"*nika tillikum*" (my friend); and the sweetness possible in the words had never been known by him until she uttered them so.

"My friend, don't feel like that, and don't think me quite a fool. I've seen enough of life to know that few men under the same circumstances would try as hard to be honest as you did, and if you failed in some ways, the fault was as much mine as yours."

"Rachel!" It was the first time he had ever called her that.

"Yes, I had some time to think about it last night," she said, with a little ironical smile about her lips; "and the conclusion I've come to is that we should afford to be honest this morning, and not—not so very much ashamed;" and then she hurried on in her speech, stumbling a little as the clasp of his hand made her unsteady through all her determination. "I will not see you again, perhaps ever. But I want you to know that I have faith in you making a great deal of your life if you try; you have the right foundations—strong will and a good principle. Mentally, you have been asleep here in the hills—don't find fault with your awakening. And don't feel so—so remorseful about—that night. There are some things people do and think that they can't help—we couldn't help that night; and so—good-bye—Jack."

"God bless you, girl!" were the heart-felt, earnest words that answered her good-bye; and with a last firm clasp of hands, she turned Betty's head toward the trail Jim had taken, and rode away under the cedar boughs.

Genesee stood bare-headed, with a new light in his eyes as he watched her—the dawn of some growing determination.

Once she looked back, and seeing him still there, touched her cap in military fashion, and with a smile disappeared in the wet woods. And as he turned

away there crept from the shrubbery at the junction of the trails Talapa, who, with that slow, knowing smile about her full lips, stole after him—in her dusky silence a very shadow of a man's past that grows heavy and wide after the noon is dead, and bars out lives from sunny doors where happiness might be found. His head was bent low, thinking—thinking as he walked back to the cabin that had once held at least a sort of content—a content based on one side of his nature. Had the other died, or was it only asleep? And she had told him not to find fault with his awakening—she! He had never before realized the wealth or loss one woman could make to the world.

"Ashamed to look her in the face!" His own words echoed in his ears as he walked under the wet leaves, with the shadow of the shame skulking unseen after him; and then, little by little, the sense of her farewell came back to him, and running through it, that strong thread of faith in him yet, making his life more worth living.

"D—d little in my present outfit for her to build any foundation for hope on," he muttered grimly, as he saddled and bridled Mowitza, as if in hot haste to be gone somewhere, and then sat down on the doorstep as if forgetful of the intention.

Talapa slipped past him with an armful of bark for the fire. Not a word had passed between them since the night before, and the girl watched him covertly from under drooped lids. Was she trying to fathom his meditations, or determine how far they were to affect her own future? For as the birds foretell by the signs in the air the change of the summer, so Talapa, through the atmosphere of the cabin that morn-

ing, felt approach the end of a season that had been to her luxurious with comforts new to her; and though the Indian blood in her veins may have disdained the adjuncts of civilization, yet the French tide that crossed it carried to her the Gallic yearning for the dainties and delicacies of life. To be sure, one would not find many of those in a back-woodsman's cabin; but all content is comparative, and Talapa's basis of comparison was the earthen floor of a thronged "tepee," or wigwam, where blows had been more frequent than square meals; and being a thing feminine, her affections turned to this white man of the woods who could give her a floor of boards and a dinner-pot never empty, and moreover, being of the sex feminine, those bonds of affection were no doubt securely fastened—bonds welded in a circle—endless.

At least those attributes, vaguely remembered, are usually conceded to the more gentle half of humanity, and I give Talapa the benefit of the belief, as her portrait has been of necessity set in the shadows, and has need of all the high lights that can be found for it. And whatever she may have lacked from a high-church point of view, she had at least enviable self-possession. Whatever tumult of wounded feeling there may have been in this daughter of the forest, she slunk around sedately, with an air that in a white woman would be called martyr-like, and said nothing.

It was as well, perhaps, that she had the rare gift of silence, for the man at the door, with his chin resting grimly on his fists, did not seem at all sympathetic, or in the humor to fit himself to anyone's moods. The tones of that girl's voice were still vibrating over chords in his nature that disturbed him. He did not even notice Talapa's movements

until she ceased them by squatting down with native grace by the fire-place, and then—

"Get up off that!" he roared, in a voice that has tened Talapa's rising considerably.

"That" was the buffalo-robe on which the other girl had throned herself the night before; and what a picture she had made in the fire-light!

Genesee in two strides crossed the floor, and grabbing the robe, flung it over his shoulder. No, it was not courteous to unseat a lady with so little ceremony —it may not even have been natural to him, so many things are not natural to us human things that are yet so true.

"And why so?" asked Talapa sullenly, her back against the wall as if in a position to show fight; that is, she said "*Pe-kah-ta?*" but, for the benefit of the civilized reader, the more ordinary English is given— "And why so?"

Genesee looked at her a moment from head to foot, but the scrutiny resulted in silence—no remark. At length he walked back to the chest against the wall, and unlocking it, drew out an account-book, between the leaves of which were some money orders; two of them he took out, putting the rest in his pocket. Then, writing a signature on those two—not the name of Jack Genesee, by the way—he turned to Mistress Talapa, who had slid from the wall down on the floor minus the buffalo-robe.

"Here!" he said tersely. "I am going away. *Klatawah si-ah*— do you understand?" And then, fishing some silver out of his pocket, he handed it to her with the notes. "Take these to the settlement—to the bank-store. They'll give you money—money to live all winter. Live in the cabin if you want; only

get out in the spring—do you hear? I will want it myself then—and I want it alone."

Without comment, Talapa reached up and took the money, looking curiously at the notes, as if to decipher the meaning in the pictured paper, and then:

"*Nika wake tikegh* Talapa?" she queried, but with nothing in her tone to tell if she cared whether he wanted her or not.

"Not by a—" he began energetically, and then, "you are your own boss now," he added, more quietly. "Go where you please, only you'd better keep clear of the old gang, for I won't buy you from them again—*kumtuks?*"

Talapa nodded that she understood, her eyes roving about the cabin, possibly taking note of the wealth that she had until spring to revel in or filch from.

Genesee noticed that mental reckoning.

"Leave these things alone," he said shortly "Use them, but leave them here. If any of them are gone when I get back—well, I'll go after them."

And throwing the robe again over his arm, he strode out through the door, mounted Mowitza, and rode away.

It was not a sentimental finale to an idyl of the wood, but by the time the finale is reached, the average human specimen has no sentiment to waste. Had they possessed any to begin with?

It was hard to tell whether Talapa was crushed by the cold cruelty of that leave-taking, or whether she was indifferent; that very uncertainty is a charm exerted over us by those conservative natures that lock within themselves wrath or joy where we ordinary mortals give expression to ours with all the language possessed by us, and occasionally borrow some adjectives that would puzzle us to give a translation of.

Talapa sat where he left her, not moving except once to shy a pine knot at a rat by the cupboard—and hit it, too, though she did belong to the sex divine. So she sat, pensively dribbling the silver coin from hand to hand, until the morning crept away and the sun shone through the mists.

What was it that at last awakened her from an apparent dreamland—the note of that bird whistling in the forest in very gladness that the sun shone again? Evidently so, and the Indian blood in her veins had taught her the secret of sympathy with the wild things, for she gave an answering call, half voice, half whistle. Silence for a little, and then again from the timber came that quavering note, with the rising inflection at the finish that was so near an interrogation.

It brought Talapa to her feet, and going to the door, she sent a short, impatient call that a little later was answered by the appearance of a comely buck—one of the order of red men—who lounged down the little incline with his head thrust forward as if to scent danger if any was about; but a few words from the girl assuring him that the coast was clear—the fort unguarded—gave him more an air of assurance, as he stepped across the threshold and squatted down on the side of the bed.

"Genesee gone?" he queried in the musical medley of consonants.

Talapa grunted an assent, with love in her eyes for the noble specimen on the bed.

"Gone far—gone all time—till spring," she communicated, as if sure of being the giver of welcome news. "House all mine—everything mine—all winter."

"Ugh!" was all the sound given in answer to the

information; but the wide mouth curved upward ever so slightly at the corners, and coupled with the interrogative grunt, expressed, no doubt, as much content as generally falls to the lot of individual humanity. One of his boots hurt him, or rather the moccasins which he wore with leggings, and above them old blue pantaloons and a red shirt; the moccasin was ripped, and without ceremony he loosened it and kicked it toward Talapa.

"*Mamook tipshin*," he remarked briefly; and by that laconic order to sew his moccasin, Skulking Brave virtually took possession of Genesee's cabin and Genesee's squaw.

Through the gray shadows of that morning Rachel and Jim rode almost in silence down the mountain trail. The memory of the girl was too busy for speech, and the frequent yawns of Jim showed that a longer sleep would have been appreciated by him.

"Say," he remarked at last, as the trail grew wide enough for them to ride abreast, "everything was jolly back there at Mr. Jack's last night, but I'm blest if it was this morning. The breakfast wasn't anything to brag of, an' the fire was no good, an' the fog made the cabin as damp as rain when the door was open, an' he was glum an' quiet, an' you wasn't much better. Say, was it that Injun cook o' his you was afeared to eat after?"

"Not exactly," she answered with a little laugh; "what an observer you are, Jim! I suppose the atmosphere of the cabin was the effect of the storm last night."

"What? Well, the storm wasn't much worse to plow through last night than the wet timber this morning," he answered morosely; "but say, here's the

sun coming out at last—by George! How the wind lifts the fog when it gets started. Look at it!" And then, as the sunlight really crept in a great shimmer through the pines, he added: "It might just as well have come earlier, or else kept away altogether, for we're as wet now as we can get."

"Be thankful that it shines at all, Jim."

"Oh, the shine's all right, but it shines too late."

"Yes," agreed the girl, with a memory of shamed, despairing eyes flitting through her brain. "Yes, it always shines too late—for someone."

"It's for two of us this time," replied grumbling Jim, taking her speech literally. "We've had a Nick of a time anyway this trip. Why that storm had to wait until just the day we got lost, so as we'd get wet, an' straggle home dead beat—an' without the sheep—I can't see."

"No, we can't see," said Rachel, with a queer little smile. "Perhaps—perhaps it's all because this is the end instead of the beginning of a *cultus corrie.*"

PART THIRD.

"PRINCE CHARLIE."

CHAPTER I.

IN THE KOOTENAI SPRING-TIME.

In the spring that followed, what a spirit of promise and enterprise was abroad on the Hardy ranch! What multitudes of white lambs, uncertain in the legs, staggered and tottered about the pasture lands! and what musical rills of joy in the mountain streams escaping through the sunshine from their prisons of ice! The flowers rose from the dead once more—such a fragrant resurrection! slipping from out their damp coffins and russet winding-sheets with dauntless heads erect, and eager lips open to the breath of promise. Some herald must bear to their earth-homes the tidings of how sweet the sun of May is—perhaps the snow sprites who are melted into tears at his glances and slip out of sight to send him a carpet of many colors instead of the spotless white his looks had banished. It may be so, though only the theory of an alien.

And then the winged choruses of the air! What matinees they held in the sylvan places among the white blossoms of the dogwood and the feathery tassels of the river willow, all nodding, swaying in the soft kisses sent by the Pacific from the southwest—soft relays of warmth and moisture that moderate those

western valleys until they are affronted by the rocky wall that of old was called by the Indians the Chippewyan Mountains, but which in our own day, in the more poetical language of the usurper, has been improved upon and dubbed the "Rockies." But all the commonplaces of those aliens can not deprive the inaccessible, conservative solitudes of their wild charms. And after those long months of repression, how warmly their smile bursts forth—and how contagious it is!

Laugh though the world may at the vibrations of poet hearts echoing the songs of the youngest of seasons, how can they help it? It is never the empty vessel that brims over, and with the spring a sort of inspiration is wakened in the most prosaic of us. The same spirit of change that thrills the saplings with fresh vitality sends through human veins a creeping ecstasy of new life. And all its insidious, penetrating charm seemed abroad there in the Northern-land escaped from under the white cloak of winter. The young grass, fresh from the valley rains, warmed into emerald velvet in the sunshine, bordered and braced with yellow buttons of dandelion; while the soil was turned over with the ploughs, and field and garden stocked with seed for the harvest.

Energetic, busy days those were after the long months of semi-inaction; even the horses were too mettlesome for farm drudgery—intoxicated, no doubt, by the bracing, free winds that whispered of the few scattered droves away off to the north that bore no harness and owned no master. All things were rebellious at the long restraint, and were breaking into new paths of life for the new season.

Even a hulking Siwash, with his squaw and children, came dragging down the valley in the wake of

the freshets, going to the Reservation south, content to go any place where they could get regular meals, with but the proviso to be "good Injun."

They loafed about the ranch two days, resting, and coming in for a share of rations from the Hardy table; and the little barefooted "hostiles" would stand about the gate and peer in around the posts of the porch, saying in insinuating tones:

"Pale papoose?"

Yes, the spirit of the hills and grazing lands had crept under the rafters and between the walls, and a new life had been given to the world, just as the first violets crept sunward.

And of course no other life was ever quite so sweet, so altogether priceless, as this little mite, who was already mistress of all she surveyed; and Aunty Luce—their one female servant—declared:

"Them eyes o' hers certainly do see everything in reach of 'em. She's a mighty peart chile, I'm tellin' ye."

Even Jim had taken to loafing around the house more than of old, and showing a good deal of nervous irritation if by any chance "she" was allowed to test her lungs in the slightest degree. The setter pups paled into insignificance, and a dozen times a day he would remark to Ivans that it was "the darndest, cutest, little customer he ever saw."

"Even you have become somewhat civilized, Rachel, since baby's arrival," remarked Tillie in commendation.

Yes, Rachel was still there. At the last moment, a few appealing glances from Tillie and some persuasive words from Hen had settled the question, and a rebellion was declared against taking the home

trail, and all the words of the Houghtons fell on barren soil, for she would not—and she would not.

"They will never miss me back there in Kentucky," she argued; "there are so many girls there. But out here, femininity is at a premium. Let me alone, Clara; I may take the prize."

"And when am I to tell the folks you will come back?" asked Mrs. Houghton, with the purpose of settling on a fixed time and then holding her to it.

"Just tell them the truth, dear—say you don't know," answered the girl sweetly. "I may locate a claim out here yet and develop into a stock-grower. Do not look so sulky. I may be of use here; no one needs me in Kentucky."

"What of Nard Stevens?" was a final query; at which Rachel no longer smiled—she laughed.

"Oh, you silly Clara!" she burst out derisively. "You think yourself so wise, and you never see an inch beyond that little nose of yours. Nard needs me no more than I need him—bless the boy! He's a good fellow; but you can not use him as a trump card in this game, my dear. Yes, I know that speech is slangy. Give my love to Nard when you see him—well, then, my kind regards and best wishes if the other term conflicts with your proper spirit, and tell him I have located out here to grow up with the country."

And through the months that followed she assuredly grew to the country at all events; the comparative mildness of the winters proving a complete surprise to her, as, hearing of the severe weather of the North, she had not known that its greatest intensity extends only to the eastern wall of the great mountain range, and once crossing the divide, the Chinook winds or

currents from the Pacific give the valleys much the temperature of our Middle States, or even more mild, since the snow-fall in the mountains is generally rain in the lowlands. Sometimes, of course, with the quick changes that only the wind knows, there would come a swoop downward of cold from the direct North, cutting through the basins, and driving the Pacific air back coastward in a fury, and those fitful gusts were to be guarded against for man or beast; and wise were growing those eastern prophets in their quickness to judge from the heavens whether storm or calm was to be with them.

But despite Clara's many predictions, the days did not grow dull to her, and the ranch was not a prison in winter-time. She had too clearly developed the faculty of always making the best of her surroundings and generally drawing out the best points in the people about her.

It was that trait of hers that first awakened her interest in that splendid animal, their guide from the Maple range.

He had disappeared—gone from the Kootenai country, so they told her. But where? or for what? That none could answer.

Her memory sometimes brought her swift flushes of mortification when she thought of him—of their association so pregnant with some sympathy or subtle influence that had set the world so far beyond them at times. Now that he was gone, and their knowledge of each other perhaps all over, she tried to coolly reason it all out for herself, but found so much that contained no reason—that had existed only through impulse—impulses not easy to realize once outside the circle of their attending circumstances.

Those memories puzzled her—her own weakness when she lay in his arms, and her own gift of second-sight that gave her an understanding of him that morning when she turned champion for him against himself.

Was it really an understanding of him? or was it only that old habit of hers of discovering fine traits in characters voted worthless?—discoveries laughed at by her friends, until her "spectacles of imagination" were sometimes requested if some specimen of the *genus homo* without any redeeming points was under discussion.

Was it so in this case? She had asked herself the question more than once during the winter. And if she had been at all pliable in her opinions, she would long ere spring have dropped back to the original impression that the man was a magnificent animal with an intellect, and with spirituality and morality sleeping.

But she was not. A certain stubbornness in her nature kept her from being influenced, as the others were, at the knowledge that after all they had had a veritable "squaw man" as a guide.

Hardy was surprised, and Tillie was inconsolable.

"I never will believe in an honest face again!" she protested.

"Nonsense!" laughed Rachel. "Pocahontas was an Indian, and Rolfe was not hustled out of society in consequence."

"N—No," assented Tillie, eying Rachel doubtfully; "but, then, you see Rolfe married Pocahontas."

"Yes?"

"And—and Ivans told Hen he heard that the squaw

you saw at Genesee's was only a sort of slave. Did he tell you and Jim that she was his wife?"

"I—I don't know;" and Rachel sat suddenly down on a chair near the window and looked rather hopelessly at the questioner. "No, I don't believe he said so, but the circumstances and all—well, I took it for granted; he looked so ashamed."

"And you thought it was because of a marriage ceremony, not for the lack of one?"

"Yes," acknowledged the girl, inwardly wondering why that view of the question had not presented itself to her. Had she after all imagined herself sighting an eagle, and was it on nearer acquaintance to develop into a vulture—or, worse still, a buzzard—a thing reveling only in carrion, and knowing itself too unclean to breathe the same air with the untainted! So it seemed; so Tillie was convinced; so she knew Clara would have thought. In fact, in all the range of her female acquaintances she could think of none whose opinion would not have been the same, and she had an impatient sort of wonder with herself for not agreeing with them. But the memory of the man's face that morning, and the echo of that "God bless you, girl!" always drifted her away from utter unbelief in him.

She heard considerable about him that winter; that he was thought rather eccentric, and belonged more to the Indians than the whites, sometimes living with a tribe of Kootenais for weeks, sometimes disappearing, no one knew where, for months, and then settling down in the cabin again and placidly digging away at that hole in the hill by the little lake—the hill itself called by the Indians "*Tamahnous*," meaning bewitched, or haunted. And his persistence at that

work was one of the eccentric things that made some people say significantly:

"They allowed Genesee was a good man, but a little 'touched' on the silver question."

And for Tillie's benefit Hen had to explain that the term "good" had nothing whatever to do with the man's moral or spiritual worth; its use was in a purely physical sense.

After the snows fell in the mountains there were but few strangers found their way to the new ranch. Half locked in as it was by surrounding hills, the passes were likely to be dangerous except to the initiated, and there were not many who had business urgent enough to push them through the drifts, or run their chances with land-slides. But if a stray hunter did come their way, his call was not allowed to be a short one. They had already become too thoroughly Western in their hospitality to allow the quick departure of a guest, a trait of which they had carried the germs from old Kentucky.

And what cheery evenings there were in the great sitting-room, with the logs heaped high in the stone fire-place! An uncarpeted room, with long, cushioned settees along two sides of it—and mighty restful they were voted by the loungers after the day's work; a few pictures on the wall, mostly engravings; the only color given the furnishing was in the pink and maroon chintz curtains at the windows, or cushions to oak chairs. And there in the firelight of the long evenings were cards played, or stories told, or magazines read aloud, Rachel and Hen generally taking turn about as reader. And Tillie in the depths of the cushioned rocker, knitting soft wool stuffs, was a chatelaine, the picture of serene content, with close beside her a

foil in the form of black Aunty Luce, whom only devotion to her young miss would ever have tempted into those wilds; and after the work was over for the night, it was a usual thing to see her slipping in and snuggling down quietly to listen to the stories told or read, her big eyes glancing fearfully toward windows or doors if the Indian question was ever touched on; though occasionally, if approached with due ceremony and full faith shown in her knowledge, she would herself add her share to the stories told, her donation consisting principally of "sure hoodoos," and the doings of black witches and warlocks in the land of bayous; for Aunty Luce had originally come from the swamps of Louisiana, where the native religion and superstitions have still a good following. And old Aunty's reminiscences added to the variety of their evening's bill of entertainment.

And a mail-carrier unexpectedly sprang up for them in the winter in the person of a young half-breed called Kalitan, or the Arrow. He had another name; his father, an Englishman, and agent for a fur company, had happened to be around when his swarthy offspring was ushered into the world, and he promptly bestowed on him his own name of Thomas Alexander. But it was all he did bestow on him—and that only by courtesy, not legality; and Alexander Junior had not even the pleasure of remembering his father's face, as his mother was soon deserted, and, going back to her tribe, her son was raised as an Indian, even his name in time forgotten, as by common consent the more characteristic one of Kalitan was given him because of the swiftness of foot that had placed him among the best "runners" or messengers in the Indian country—and the average speed of a runner will on a long march

out-distance that of cavalry. At the military post at Fort Missoula, Kalitan's lines had first fallen among those of Genesee, and for some unexplained reason his adherence to that individual became as devoted as Mowitza's own. And for a long time they had not ranged far apart, Genesee seldom leaving the Kootenai country that Kalitan did not disappear as well. But this last trip his occupation was gone, for MacDougall had been left word that the trail was not clear ahead, but if Kalitan was wanted he would be sent for, and that sinewy, bronze personage did not seem to think of doing other than wait—and the waiting promised to be long.

He took to hanging around Scot's Mountain more than of old, with the query, "May-be Genesee send lettah—s'pose? I go see."

And go he would, over and over again, always with a philosophic "S'pose next time," when he returned empty-handed. Sometimes he stopped at the ranch, and Rachel at once recognized him as the youth who had brought her the black bear skin months before, and pretended at the time utter ignorance of Chinook. He would speak Chinook fast enough to her now if there was any occasion, his white blood, and the idea that she was Genesee's friend, inclining him to sociability seldom known to the aristocratic conservatives of the Indian race.

The nearest mail station was twenty miles south, and it was quite an item to find a messenger willing as was Kalitan; and storm or calm, he would make the trip just the same, carrying his slip of paper on which all the names were written and which he presented as an order to the postmaster. A big mail was a cause of pride to him, especially magazines or packages.

Letters he did not think of much account, because of their size.

To Aunty Luce he was a thing of dread, as were all of his race. She was firmly convinced that the dusky, well-featured face belonged to an imp of the evil one, and that he simply slid over the hills on the cold winds, without even the aid of a broom-stick. And nights that he spent at the ranch found Aunty's ebony face closer than ever to the side of Mistress Tillie's chair.

And another member had been added to the visiting list at Hardy's, and that was the sovereign of Scot's Mountain.

Along in the midwinter, Kalitan brought a scrawled note from "Ole Man Mac," asking for some drugs of which he stood in need. The request brought to light the fact that Kalitan one day while paying visits had found "Ole Man Mac" sick in bed—"heap sick—crank—no swallow medicine but white man's."

The required white man's medicine was sent, and with it a basket with white bread, fresh butter, and various condiments of home manufacture that Tillie's kindly heart prompted her to send to the old trapper —one of their nearest neighbors.

And the following day Rachel and her henchman Jim started on Kalitan's trail, with the idea of seeing personally if any further aid was needed at the cabin that the ranch could give. A snow three days old covered the ground, in which Kalitan's trail was easily followed; and then Rachel had been over the same route before, starting light-hearted and eager, on that *cultus corrie*.

They reached Scot's Mountain a little after noon, and found its grizzled, unshaven owner much better

than he had been the day before, and close beside him on the pillow lay his one companion, the cat.

"Well, well! to think o' this!" said the old man, reaching a brawny hand to her from the bunk. "You're the first white woman as ever passed that door-post, and it's rare and glad I am that it's your own self."

"Why myself more than another?" she asked, rather surprised at his words. "I would have come long ago if I had known I was wanted, or that you even knew of me."

"Have I not, then?" he queried, looking at her sharply from under his wrinkled, half-closed lids. "But sit ye down, lady. Kalitan, bring the chair. And is that a brother—the lad there? I thought I had na heard of one. Sit you down close that I can see ye—a sight good for sore een; an' have I no heard o' ye? Ah, but I have, though. Many's the hour the lad has lain lazy like on the cot here, an' told me o' the gay folk frae the East. Ye know I'd be a bit curious o' my new neighbors, an' would be askin' many's the question, an' all the tales would end wi' something about the lass that was ay the blithe rider, an' ever the giver o' good judgment."

The girl felt her face grow hot under those sharp old eyes. She scarcely knew what to say, and yet could give no sensible reason for such embarrassment; and then—

"The lad—what lad?" she asked at last.

"Oh—ay. I clean forgot he is no lad to you. Kalitan, will ye be building up that fire a bit? When we have quality to visit we must give them a warm welcome, if no more. An' the lad, as I was sayin'," he continued, "was but Genesee—no other; though he looked more the lad when I called him so first."

"You are such old friends, then?"

"No so old as so close, ye might say. It's a matter o' five year now since he come up in these hills wi' some men who were prospectin', an' one an' another got tired and dropped down the country again till only Genesee was left. He struck that haunted hill in the Maple range that they all said was of no good, an' he would na leave it. There he stuck in very stubbornness, bewitched like by it; an' the day before his flitten in the fall found him clear through the hill, helped a bit by striking into an old mine that nobody knew aught of. Think o' that!—dug into a mine that had been abandoned by the Indians generations ago, most like."

"I did not know that the Indians ever paid attention to mining. They seem to know no use for gold or silver until the white men teach them it."

"True enough; but there the old mine stands, as a clear showin' that some o' the heathen, at some time, did mine in that range; an' the stone mallets an' such like that he stumbled on there shows that the cave was no the result o' accident."

"And has he at last given it up as hopeless?"

"That's as time may happen to tell," answered the old man sagely; "an' old Daddy Time his own self could na keep his teeth shut more tight than can Genesee if there's a bit secret to hold. But o' the old mine he said little when he was takin' the trail. only, 'It has kept these thousand o' years, Davy—it will most like keep until I get back.' "

From that speech Rachel gathered the first intimation that Genesee's absence from the Kootenai country was only a transient one. Was he then to come back and again drop his life into its old lines? She

did not like to think of it—neither to question. But that winter visit to "Ole Man Mac," as Kalitan called him, was the beginning of an avowed friendship between the old hermit of the northern hills and the young girl from the southern ones.

Her independent, curious spirit and youthful vitality was a sort of tonic to him, and as he grew better he accepted her invitation to visit the ranch, and from that on the grizzled head and still athletic frame of the old fellow were not strange ones to the Hardy household. He was there as often as was consistent with the weather in the hills and almost seventy years of braving their hardships; for of late years MacDougall did not range wide. His traps could find too many nooks near home for mink, lynx, and the black bear, and from the Kootenai tribes on the north he bought pelts, acting the trader as well as trapper; and twice a year making a trip to a settlement to dispose of his wares, with horses from his Indian neighbors to transport them with.

Rachel learned that for forty years he had followed that isolated life—moving steadily farther west or farther north as the grip of civilization made itself felt behind him; and he felt himself crowded if a settler's prairie schooner was sighted within twenty-five miles of him. The girl wondered, often, the cause of that self-exile, but no word or sign gave her any clew. He had come from the eastern highlands of Scotland when less than thirty years old, and had struck out at once for the extreme borders of civilization in America; and there he had remained—always on the borders—never quite overtaken.

"But it will be but few more stands I can make," he would say to her sometimes. "Time is little

content to be a laggard, and he is running me close in a race he has na' a doubt of the winning."

With advancing years, the barrier, whatever the foundation, that he had raised between himself and the world was evidently weakening somewhat; and first through Genesee, and now through this girl, had come a growing desire for intercourse with his own race once more. And much teasing did the girl get in consequence of the visits that by the family in general were conceded to belong to Rachel in particular, teasing, however, which she bore with indifference, openly claiming that the strongest interest was on her side, and if he forgot his visits she would certainly go herself to Scot's Mountain to learn the why and wherefore. This she did more than once, through the season, when indoor life grew at all monotonous; sometimes with Jim as a companion, and sometimes with Kalitan trotting at her mare's head, and guarding very carefully Betty's feet over the dangerous places—Aunty Luce always watching such a departure with prophecies of "Miss Rache's sca'p a-hangin' round the neck o' that red nigger some o' these days, I'm a-tellin' yeh!"

But Kalitan proved, despite prophecies, a most eager and careful guardian, seeming to feel rather proud when he was allowed to be her sole companion.

Sometimes he would say: "S'pose you hear where Genesee is—may be?" and at her negative he, like a philosopher of unlimited patience, would content himself with: "Sometime he sure come; s'pose *waum illihie*"—*waum illihie* meaning the summer-time; and Rachel, noting his faithfulness to that one idea, wondered how many seasons his patience would last through.

But at last, about the middle of April, he stalked into the ranch door one morning early, scaring Aunty Luce out of her seven senses, or as many extra ones as she lay claim to.

"Rashell Hardy?" was all he deigned to address to that personage, so inborn in the Indian is the scorn of a slave or those of slavish origin. And Kalitan, who had lived almost entirely with his tribe, had many of the aristocratic ideas of race that so soon degenerate in the Indian of the settlements or haunts of the white man. Once Aunty Luce, not understanding his ideas of caste, thought to propitiate him with some kindly social inquiry as to the state of his health and well-being, and had beat an ignominious retreat to the floor above at the black look of indignation on his face at being questioned by a slave. When Rachel took him to task for such a ferocious manner, he answered, with a sullen sort of pride: "I, Kalitan, am of a race of chiefs—not a dog to be bidden by black blood;" and she had noticed then, and at other times, that any strong emotion, especially anger, gave an elevated tone and manner of speech to him and his race, lifting it out of the slurred commonplaces of the mongrel jargon—a direct contradiction of their white brother, on whom anger generally has an effect exactly contrary. After that one venture of Aunty's at timorous friendliness, she might have been a dumb woman so far as Kalitan ever had further knowledge; for her conversations in his presence were from that date carried on entirely in pantomime, often to the annoyance, though always to the amusement, of the family.

And his abrupt entrance and query that April morning was answered by a comprehensive nod and

wave of pudgy black hands toward the sitting-room, into which he walked without knocking—that also, perhaps, being deemed a prerogative of his lordly race.

"Why, Kalitan, so early!" said Rachel in surprise. "Are you trying to outrun the sun? What is it?" For her eyes, accustomed to the usual calm of his countenance, recognized at once that some new current of emotion was struggling for supremacy in him that morning. He did not answer at once, but seated himself in impressive silence on the edge of one of the settees, and after a dramatic pause that he considered a fitting prelude to the importance of his communication, he addressed himself to Rachel—the only woman, by the way, whom he was ever known to meet or converse with on terms of equality, as Indian chivalry does not extend to their exaltation of the gentler sex.

"Rashell Hardy," he said, in a mingling of English and Chinook, "I, Kalitan, the Arrow, shoot to the south. Genesee has sent in the talking-paper to Ole-Man Mac that the Reservation Indians south have dug up the hatchet. Genesee is taking the trail from the fort, with rifle and many men, and he wants an arrow that can shoot out of sight of any other; so he wants Kalitan."

And having delivered himself of this modest encomium on his own worth, there was a stage-wait of about a minute, that might have been relieved by some words conceding his superiority, but wasn't. Rachel was looking out of the window as if in momentary forgetfulness of the honor done her in this statement of facts. Kalitan rose to his feet.

"Ole Man Mac come down valley, may be, in two

days. I stop to tell you, and say like white man, *klahowya.*"

And with the Indian word of farewell, he turned to the door, when Rachel stopped him.

"Wait, Kalitan," she said, holding out her hand to stop him. "You are going south into the hostile country. Will the Arrow carry a message as it flies?"

"Let Rashell Hardy speak. Kalitan is swift. A message is not heavy from a friend."

"That is it, Kalitan; it is to your friend—Genesee."

"Rachel!" ejaculated Tillie, who had been a silent auditor of this queer little scene, with its ceremony and its ludicrous features—ludicrous to any not knowing the red man's weakness for forms and a certain pomposity that seems a childish love of display and praise. But Rachel never ridiculed it; instead, she simply let herself drop into his tone, and thus enhanced very much his opinion of her. And at Tillie's voice she turned impatiently.

"Well, why not?" she asked; and her combative air at once reduced Tillie to withdrawing as easily as she could from the discussion.

"But, dear, the man's reputation! and really you know he is nothing we thought he was. He is scarcely fit for any lady to speak to. It is better to leave such characters alone. One never can tell how far they may presume on even recognition."

"Yes? After all, Tillie, I believe you are very much of the world worldly. Did he stop to ask if I was entirely a proper sort of person before he started to hunt for me that time in the Kootenai hills?"

"Nonsense! Of course not. But the cases are totally unlike."

"Naturally. He is a man; I am a woman. But if

the cases were reversed, though I might preserve a better reputation, I doubt much if, in some respects, I should equal the stubborn strength of character I have seen that man show at times."

"Oh, I might have known better than to advise you, Rachel, if I wanted to influence you," remarked Tillie helplessly. "You are like an Irishman, always spoiling for a fight, and hunt up the most ridiculous, impossible theories to substantiate your views; but I am so disappointed in that man—he seemed such a fine fellow. But when we are assured of our mistake, it is time, especially, Rachel, for a girl, to drop all acquaintance with him."

"I wish I was not a girl. Then I would not have to be hedged in forever. You would not think it so terrible if Hen or Ivans, or any of the men, were to meet him as usual or send word to him if they chose."

"But that is different."

"And I am sick of the differences. The more I see the narrowness of social views, the less I wonder at old MacDougall and Genesee taking to the mountains, where at least the life, even the life's immoralities, are primitive."

"Primitive! Oh, good Lord!" ejaculated Tillie in serio-comic despair. "What would you suggest as an improvement on their simplicity?"

And then, both being rather good-natured women, the absurdity of their vehemence seemed to strike them, and looking at each other for a second, they both burst out laughing.

All this time Kalitan stood, showing his silent disdain of this squaw "*wau-wau*" with the impassive gaze that went straight over their heads at the opposite wall, not seeing the debaters, as if it were beneath

his dignity to open his ears to their words. In fact, his dignity had been enhanced several degrees since his visit to the ranch, some ten days before—all because of that "talking-paper," no doubt, that had come from the Fort, and his full Indian dress—for he would scorn to wear the garb of his father—was decked with several additional trinkets, borrowed or stolen from the tribe, that were likely to render his appearance more impressive.

And Rachel, glancing at him, was reminded by that manner of dignified toleration that she had kept him waiting no doubt five minutes—and five minutes in the flight of an arrow is a life-time.

"Tell Jack Genesee," she said, turning to him in complete negligence of arguments just used, "that Rachel Hardy sends to him greetings—you understand? That she is glad to hear where he is; a soldier's life is a good one for him, and she will always have faith in him fighting well, and trying to fight on the right side. Is that message much to remember?"

Kalitan poetically answered in Chinook to the effect that his heart was in his ears when she spoke, and would be in his tongue when he met Genesee; and with that startling statement he made his exit, watched by Aunty Luce from the stairs on which she had taken refuge.

"You are a queer girl, Rache," said Tillie as Rachel stood watching the gaily-decked, sinewy form as it broke into a sort of steady trot, once outside the gate, and was so quickly out of sight down the valley.

"Am I? Try and say something more original," she suggested.

"I believe you would make a good missionary," continued Tillie debatably. "Your theory of civilizing peo-

ple seems to be all right; but while it may work capitally with those savages born in heathendom, I fear its results when applied to enlightened mortals who have preferred dropping into degraded lives. Your laudable energy is likely to be wasted on that sort of material."

"What a learned diagnosis for you to make, my child," said Miss Hardy approvingly. "Aunty Luce confided to me she was going to make a 'batch' of sugar cookies this morning, and you shall have the very first one as a reward for delivering your little speech so nicely."

CHAPTER II.

A RECRUIT FROM THE WORLD.

"Oh, cam' ye here the fight to shun,
Or herd the sheep wi' me, man?"

Spring, with its showers and promises, drifted into he dim perspective, as summer, with flaunting assumption, took possession of the foreground. And all through the changing weeks rumors came from the south and east, telling of disaffection among the hereditary lords of the soil, and petty troubles in different localities, that, like low mutterings of far-off thunder, promised storms that might be remembered.

Some rust on the wheels of the slow-moving machinery of government had caused a delay in the dealings with the people on the reservations. Treaties ignored through generations, in both letter and spirit, are not calculated to beget faith in the hearts of the red nations, or teach them belief in the straightness of our tongues. Was it the fault of the Department of the Interior at Washington, or the dishonesty of their local agents?—the chicanery of the party in office, or the scheme of some political ring that wanted to get in by bringing forward a cause for condemnation of the existing regime? Whatever one of the multitudinous excuses was finally given for neglect of duty—treaties, promises of government—Mr. Lo had now—as he has ever had—to bear the suffering in question, whether just or unjust.

Small wonder if, now and then, a spark of that old fire

in the blood ignites, and even the most tamed spirits rise up ready to write pages of history in blood. The only wonder is that they ever pass by the house or the offspring of the white race without that call of the red heart for vengeance being too strong for the hands to resist.

And through the late winter, whether through storms or floods or the schemes of men, on one of the reservations to the south the rations had not been forthcoming; and from week to week excuses were given that were no longer listened to with credence by the Indians. In vain were visits made, first to the agency, next to the nearest fort, supplicating for their rights. One delegation after another turned back from those visits unsatisfied, told by the first that the rations would be distributed when they arrived, not before; told by the second that the War Department was not in any way responsible for deficiencies of the Department of the Interior, and could not interfere—at the same time advising them to be patient, as eventually their wants would be satisfied. Eventually! and in the meantime they could go back to their tribes and eat their horses, their dogs, and see their people grow weak as the children for the want of food.

Small wonder if one group after another of the younger braves, and even the older warriors, broke loose from the promise of peace and joined the hostile bands that thieved along the border, sweeping, the outlying ranches of horses and cattle, and beating a retreat back into the hills with their booty.

Of course, the rations arrived eventually, and were distributed by those fair-minded personages whose honest dealing with the red man is proverbial along

the border; but the provisions came too late to stem the tide of secession that had set in, and the War Department had found that, after all, it would be influenced by the actions of the Department of the Interior, and that its interference was demanded for the protection of the homes on the frontier. As the homes were the homes of white citizens, its action was, of course, one of promptness. White men's votes decide who shall continue to sit in the high places of the land, or who shall step down and out to make way for the new man of new promises.

But they found ordinary methods of war were of little avail against the scattered bands, who, like bees in the summer-time, divided their swarms, and honey-combed the hills, knowing every retreat, and posted, by Indian runners and kindred left behind, as to every movement.

It was simply a war of skirmishing, and one not likely to cease soon. Reinforcements came to the hostile tribes from all the worthless outlaws of the border—some of white, others of mixed blood; and from those mongrels resulted the more atrocious features of the outbreak. They fought and schemed with the Indian because they wanted his protection, and any proposed treaty for peace was argued against by them most vehemently. And while an Indian makes a good thief, a half-breed makes a better; but the white man, if his taste runs in that direction, is an artist, and to him is his red brother indebted for much teaching in the subtle art through many generations.

That, and like accomplishments, made them comrades to be desired by the tribes who depended for their subsistence on the country guarded by troops; and scientific methods of thievery were resorted to,

that required the superior brain and the white face of the Caucasian.

And so was the trouble fostered, and the contagion spread, until far-off tribes, hearing of it, missed now one, now another, of their more restless spirits; and the white authorities found it would not do to trust to the peace of any of the nations—the only surety was to guard it. And this they tried to do, locating posts and stationing troops near even the most peaceable tribes—their presence suggesting the advisability of remaining so.

And, now through one, now another, and generally by MacDougall, the people at the ranch heard at times of the Arrow and of Genesee. They were with the troops, and were together; and the latter's knowledge of Indian tactics was counting much in his favor evidently, as his opinions were cited in the reports and prophecies of results, and his influence had decided more than one movement of the campaign that had won him the commendation of his superior officers—circumstances that were, of course, discussed pro and con by the people of the Kootenai. There was little of local news in so isolated a place, and Rachel declared they were all developing into gossips because of the avidity with which the slightest of events in their own region was talked over; and of course the Indian question was an all-absorbing topic, and to Aunty Luce was attended by a sort of paralysis of terror. In vain to point out the friendly listlessness of the Kootenais, their nearest neighbors of the red race, for the Kootenais were simple hunters or fishers, making war on none, unless now and then a detachment of thieving Blackfeet from east of the mountains would file through the old Flathead Pass and run off portions of their

stock; for in the time of the fishing, the greater half the village would move for the season away from their pasture-lands, in search of the fish that they smoke, dry, and pack in osier baskets for the winter. And it was generally during that temporary flitting that a visit from those neighboring tribes would be made, and an assessment levied, to the extent of all loose cattle in reach, and an occasional squaw now and then. And so, though the Kootenais were on the most friendly terms with the few whites about them, their relations were decidedly strained toward their red brethren on the east, or across the line into the Northwest Territories of the Britons.

But it was useless to talk "good Indian" to Aunty, who was afraid to stay in the house or out of it; afraid to start back to Kentucky, yet sure that delay meant death. And all through the summer, let the rest have faith if they chose, yet the baby's wardrobe and her own were always packed ready for flight at the first signal of danger.

But with this one exception, the Indian question troubled the people at the ranch but little. They found too many duties on the new ground to take up their time and attention—the success of the sheep-raising experiment showing signs of such thorough success that it would require more than the skirmishing of the races a couple of hundred miles away to disenchant Hardy with the country; and where he was content, Tillie was, of course; and Rachel—well, Rachel was deemed a sort of vagabond in regard to a settlement anywhere. She was satisfied with any place where the fences were not too high, nor the limits of her range too narrow.

She often wondered that the world in general knew

so little of that beautiful corner of the earth. She knew that people flocked to "resorts" that possessed not at all the wealth of beauties that whimsical nature had scattered on those Indian hills.

But in the fall, about a year after the *cultus corrie*, she began to think that, after all, they might meet with deserved appreciation some day, for one man rode up into them, not for stock, or to locate land, or any of the few reasons that brought people to the Kootenai country, but simply and only for pleasure and rest—so he said.

It was in late September, and as he rode leisurely through the dusk shadows of the pines, and along the passionate, restless path of some mountain stream, his expressive face showed a more than casual interest in the prodigality of delightful vistas and impressive grandeur of the mountains, as they loomed about him or slowly drifted beneath him.

All the beauty of autumn was around him, yet he himself looked like one of the people who belong only to summer, judging from his eager eyes and the boyish laugh that broke on the still air as he watched the pranks of some squirrels making holiday in their own domain.

Not that the stranger was so young. He was not a boy in years; but the spirit of youth, that remains so long with some natures, shone in his glance, and loitered about the sensitive mouth. In seeing him smile, one would forget the thread of premature silver that shone through the bronze of his hair. He was almost beautiful in face; yet his stature, which was much above the average, and his dextrously complete proportions, debarred him from the beauty that is effeminate; but it was in every way refined.

It was noon when stragglers of sheep met his gaze, dotting with white the green and amber grasses of the great park, and showing, as he forded Missoula Creek, a picture before him, framed in the high wall of the hills, and restful with pastoral peace that was a striking contrast to the untamable wilds through which he had passed.

"Almost there," he whispered eagerly, as he rode along the corrals and was greeted by a tumbling lot of sheep-dogs. "Will it be of use?"

Before he reached the gate he was met by Hardy, who, bare-headed, had left the dinner-table to welcome a visitor whom, from the porch, all had decided was a stranger.

The host scattered the dogs. There were a few words, a shake of hands, and they could hear Hardy's hearty invitation to dismount.

Meanwhile, Aunty Luce was bustling about as fast as her stout, short form would allow her, arranging a place at the table for the late guest, and thanking her stars that a real gentleman was to be company for them once more—her opinion that he was a gentleman having foundation in the fact that he wore "store-clothes" instead of the trappings of buckskin affected by the natives of the Kootenai.

But they found he was possessed of more decided points due the idea of a gentleman, both in breeding and education, and before many remarks were exchanged, the rest of the family, as well as Aunty, were congratulating themselves on this acquisition from the world.

"Yes, I am altogether a stranger up here," he said pleasantly, in answer to a query; "and at Holland's they told me there was one of my Statesmen up in this

park; so I asked the way and started west, instead of north, as I had thought of going."

"Doing a bit o' prospectin', then?" was MacDougall's query.

It was a visiting-day of his, and he had been watching the new-comer's face with scrutinizing eyes ever since the first words of self-introduction, in which his name had been overlooked.

"Well—yes," answered the other slowly, as if he was not decided, or had not anticipated the question.

"I thought as much, since ye carry no hunting gear," remarked the trapper; "and in this country a man is likely to be the one thing or the other."

"And in this case it is the other," smiled the stranger, "as I have not as yet found any vocation; I have come out here to forget I ever had one—prospecting for a rest."

"Well, there is plenty of room here to rest in," said Hardy hospitably.

"Yes, or work in," added Rachel; "and a new country needs the workers."

Tillie threw an admonishing glance as payment for the uncivil speech, and the stranger turned his attention to the speaker. The contour of her face must have been pleasing, since he looked at it interestedly, as if forgetting in its contemplation the words uttered; and then—

"Indeed?" he said at last. "Well, who knows but what I may develop into a worker; is the industry here contagious?"

And Rachel, whose tone had been more uncivil than her intention, felt herself put at a disadvantage by the suavity that was not a feature of Kootenai character.

"Indeed, then," said MacDougall, "it's gettin' to be a

brisk, busy country these late days, an' ye canna go a matter o' twenty mile without trippin' up on a settlement. An' ye come from Holland's without a guide? That's pretty good for a stranger in the parts, as I doubt na ye be, Mr. —" And he stopped suggestively.

The stranger laughed, and drew a card from his pocket.

"I told Mr. Hardy my name at the gate," he observed, "but it evidently escaped his memory; he introduced me only as a stranger."

"It does not matter, however, what a man is called out here," returned Hardy. "It is the man that is valued in the West—not the name given him; now, back home they weighed about equal."

"And in my country," said MacDougall, looking up from the card, "here's a name that would carry ye many a mile, an' bespeak ye good-will from many an old heart— Charles Stuart. It's a name to take unco' good care of, my man."

"I try to take good care of the owner of it, at all events," answered the stranger; "but it is not an uncommon name in America; there are few parts of the country in which I am not able to find a namesake."

"Indeed, then, an' I have run across none o' the name these seven odd year," said MacDougall; "an' then it was a man in the Bitter Root Mountains, who spelt it with the 'e-w' instead of the 'u,' an' had never e'en heard tell o' Prince Charlie."

"And you have known no one in this country by the name of Stuart?" asked the stranger, his eyes seeming to watch at the same time both Hardy and the old man. Ivans and Jim had left the table and lounged out to the stables to smoke.

"No," answered Hardy; "we are comparatively newcomers here, but all the settlers within a radius of fifty miles are already known to us by name—it is not so difficult where white men are so scarce; and I have never heard of any Stuarts among them."

"Then I have dropped literally into a strange country," said Stuart, rising and walking to the end of the porch; "and from what I have seen of it, a decidedly interesting one. Hunting good?"

"Excellent," returned Hardy. "We've been too busy to get to the hills so far this year, but now we have a little breathing-spell, and if you would care to try your luck with game, I would take pleasure in showing you our hunting-grounds."

"That certainly is kind of you," said Mr. Stuart heartily, "and I will accept the offer most gratefully. The fact is, I've been rather used up with a professional life, and was in hopes a trip up through this country would set me on my feet again. Over there at Holland's they told me about you and your family, and—"

"Yes," completed Hardy, "a man with his family and household goods up in these hills is a marked individual; but my wife and cousin do not rebel at the exile; they are both philosophers, in their way."

"Yes?" and Stuart's agreement had the intonation of a man who hears, but ceases to grasp the sense of words. Some closer thought seemed present with him. He glanced at Hardy, a swift, quickly withdrawn scrutiny, and then said: "Do you know, Mr. Hardy, I should like to propose myself for membership in your household for a few weeks; would it be deemed an impertinence? I can't stay at Holland Centre with any comfort, and this place of

yours seems to be a haven of rest. Could you give me space to live in for a while, without me being a nuisance to the establishment?"

"Yes, and welcome," answered Hardy. "You don't seem to appreciate what a treat it is to have a visitor from civilization ride our way; and one from our old State is especially in demand. I was going to propose that you move your outfit up here and make the ranch your headquarters while in the country. A nuisance! No, sir."

And so was the simple ceremony concluded that introduced this stranger to the Hardys, to the general satisfaction of all concerned. Rachel was the only member who did not seem specially delighted.

"Oh, yes, he is clever and entertaining," she agreed to Tillie, "and his manner is so charmingly insinuating that I may end by falling in love with him; but I am beginning with an unreasonable desire to say snappy things to him."

"I should say it was unreasonable— a thorough gentleman, of fine family connections. He mentioned several Kentucky families that Hen could know what his standing was back home, and his profession is that of medicine— I noticed the M. D. on his card; and altogether I can not see what ground you have for objecting."

"I am not objecting—bless the man! no," returned Rachel; "only, because a man has acquired a charming manner and possesses a handsome face is no reason for me devoting myself to admiration of him, like Aunty Luce. She is jubilant over having so fine a gentleman to wait on. You are discreetly elated over having so charming a person to entertain; even Miss Margaret (Miss Margaret was the baby)—everything

feminine about the place has succumbed. And I suppose my reason for keeping on my own side of the fence is that I'm jealous. I am no longer first in the affections of anyone about the place. MacDougall is likely to swear allegiance at any time because his name is Stuart— and, above all, Charlie Stuart; even Jim is wavering in the balance, and shows a wonderful alacrity in anticipating the wishes of this tenderfoot. Is it a wonder I rebel?"

"Well, for the comfort of the rest of us, do not begin a civil war," admonished Tillie, and was only reassured by a promise that there should be no active hostilities. "If you are more comfortable in war than in peace, go south and fight with the skirmishing Indians," suggested the little woman.

"I will," said Rachel. "If you get any more civilized recruits up here to make the place tame and commonplace, I will seek service under the standard of the Arrow, or Genesee." And at the mention of the last name Tillie discreetly subsided.

But the girl found the raw recruit rapidly making himself a power in the social world of the ranch. There was something of charming grace in the man's personality; and that rare gift of a sympathetic nature that had also the faculty of expression, at once accorded him the trust of women and children.

It may be that a degree of physical beauty influenced them also, for his fine, well-shaped head was very good to look at; the poise of the erect, tall figure bespoke serene self-confidence; the curves of his lips, slightly hidden by a mustache, yet gave a sweetness of expression to the lower part of his face; while the wide brows and fine eyes gave an intellectual cast to a personality that did not lack attractive points.

"The lad has the old grace o' the Stuarts," MacDougall affirmed, sticking to his fancy of connecting the old blood-royal with the slip of the name grown on alien ground. "And it is much the same free-handed manner o' the old stock—free o' their smiles, an' winning o' hearts by the clasp o' the hand; but there's a bit about this one that is a rare puzzle to me. I think like enough it's the eyes, they're main handsome ones; but I'm always a-rackin' o' my brains to tell where I've seen them before."

Rachel, to whom this speech was made, only laughed.

"He has never been West until now, so you can not have seen them," she argued; but her tone made the old man regard her with attention.

"What do ye mean by that, lass?"

"Oh, nothing, only he says so;" and then she went into the house, leaving her guest sitting on the bench of the porch.

"The Stuart," as the others had already dropped into calling him, after MacDougall, had been at the ranch about a week. The proposed hunt was yet to be; and in the meantime he rode through the parks, and saw all that was near-about the ranch. He talked stock-raising with Hardy, of medicinal herbs with Aunty Luce, of babies with Tillie, and with Rachel of numerous worldly topics of interest, that, however, never seemed to change much the nature of their acquaintance; that remained much as it had done the first day—on her side, arms burnished and ready for action; on his, the serene gentleness of manner that was almost a caress, a changeless good-humor that spoke volumes for his disposition, and at times forced even herself into a sort of admiration of him.

The health-recruiting trip he had come on, he was evidently taking advantage of, for he almost lived out-of-doors, and looked wonderfully healthy and athletic for an invalid. In the house, he wrote a good deal. But the morning Rachel left MacDougall on the porch, the Stuart came sauntering up the path, the picture of careless content with himself and the world. "Where has Mr. Hardy gone?" he inquired, seating himself on the porch. "I've been looking for him out at the pens, but they have all disappeared."

"Gone up the range for the yearlin's that strayed off the last week; but they'll no go far."

"I wanted to ask Mr. Hardy about mail out here. How often is it brought to the ranch?"

"Well," said the old man, between the puffs of his pipe, "that depends a bit on how often it is sent for; just whene'er they're a bit slack o' work, or if any body o' them wants the trip made special; but Hardy will be sendin' Jimmy across for it, if it's any favor to you— be sure o' that."

"Oh, for that matter—I seem to be the most useless commodity about the ranch—I could make the trip myself. Is Jim the usual mail-carrier?"

"Well, I canna say; Andrews, a new man here, goes sometimes, but it's no rare thing for him to come home carrying more weight in whisky than in the letters, an' Hardy got a bit tired o' that."

"But haven't you a regular mail-carrier for this part of the country?" persisted Stuart.

MacDougall laughed shortly at the idea. "Who'd be paying the post?" he asked, "with but the Hardys an' myself, ye might say, barring the Kootenais; an' I have na heard that they know the use of a postage-stamp."

"But some one of their tribe does come to the Centre for mail," continued Stuart in half argument—"an Indian youth; have you never seen him?"

"From the Kootenais? Well, I have not, then. It may be, of late, there are white men among them, but canna say; I see little o' any o' them this long time."

"And know no other white people in this region?"

"No, lad, not for a long time," said the old man, with a half sigh.

The listener rose to his feet. "I think," he said, as if a prospect of new interest had suddenly been awakened in his mind—"I think I would like to make a trip up into the country of the Kootenais. It is not very far, I believe, and would be a new experience. Yes, if I could get a guide, I would go."

"Well," said MacDougall drily, "seeing I've lived next door to the Kootenais for some time, I might be able to take ye a trip that way myself."

Rachel, writing inside the window, heard the conversation, and smiled to herself.

"Strange that Kalitan should have slipped MacDougall's memory," she thought; "but then he may have been thinking only of the present, and the Stuart, of months back. So he does know some things of people in the Kootenai, for all his blind ignorance. And he would have learned more, if he had not been so clever and waited until the rest were gone, to question. I wonder what he is hunting for in this country; I don't believe it is four-footed game."

CHAPTER III.

AT CROSS-PURPOSES.

"Their tricks and craft ha' put me daft,
They've ta'em me in, and a' that."

"And so you got back unharmed from the midst of the hostiles?" asked Rachel in mock surprise, when, a week later, Hardy, Stuart, and MacDougall returned from their pilgrimage, bringing with them specimens of deer they had sighted on their return.

"Hostiles is about the last name to apply to them, I should imagine," remarked Stuart; "they are as peaceable as sheep."

"But they can fight, too," said MacDougall, "an' used to be reckoned hard customers to meet; but the Blackfeet ha' well-nigh been the finish o' them. The last o' their war-chiefs is an old, old man now, an' there's small chance that any other will ever walk in his moccasins."

"I've been told something of the man's character," said Rachel, "but have forgotten his name—Bald Eagle?"

"Grey Eagle. An' there's more character in him worth the tellin' of than you'll find in any Siwash in these parts. I doubt na Genesee told you tales o' him. He took a rare, strange liking to Genesee from the first—made him some presents, an' went through a bit o' ceremony by which they adopt a warrior."

"Was this Genesee of another tribe?" asked Stuart, who was always attentive to any information of the natives.

"Yes, said Rachel quickly, anticipating the others, "of a totally different tribe— one of the most extensive in America at present."

"A youth? A half-breed?"

"No," she replied; "an older man than you, and of pure blood. Hen, there is Miss Margaret pummeling the window for you to notice her. Davy MacDougall, did you bring me nothing at all as a relic of your trip? Well, I must say times are changing when you forget me for an entire week."

Both the men looked a little amused at Rachel's truthful yet misleading replies, and thinking it just one of her freaks, did not interfere, though it was curious to them both that Stuart, living among them so many days, had not heard Genesee mentioned before. But no late news coming from the southern posts, had made the conversations of their troops flag somewhat; while Stuart, coming into their circle, brought new interests, new topics, that had for the while superseded the old, and Genesee's absence of a year had made them count him no longer as a neighbor. Then it may be that Rachel had, ere this warded off attention from the subject. She scarcely could explain to herself why she did it—it was an instinctive impulse in the beginning; and sometimes she laughed at herself for the folly of it.

"Never mind," she would reassure herself by saying, "even if I am wrong, I harm no one with the fancy; and I have just enough curiosity to make me wonder what that man's real business is in these wilds, for he is not nearly so careless as his manner, and not nearly so light-hearted as his laugh."

"Well, did you find any white men among the Kootenais?" she asked him abruptly, the day of his return.

His head, bent that Miss Margaret could amuse herself with it, as a toy of immense interest, raised suddenly. Much in the girl's tone and manner to him was at times suggestive; this was one of the times. His usually pale face was flushed from his position, and his rumpled hair gave him a totally different appearance as he turned on her a look half-compelling in its direct regard.

"What made you ask that?" he demanded, in a tone that matched the eyes.

She laughed; to see him throw off his guard of gracious suavity was victory enough for one day.

"My feminine curiosity prompted the question," she replied easily. "Did you?"

"No," he returned, after a rather steady look at her; "none that you could call men."

"A specimen, then?"

"Heaven help the race, if the one I saw was accepted as a specimen," he answered fervently; "a filthy, unkempt individual, living on the outskirts of the village, and much more degraded than any Indian I met; but he had a squaw wife."

"Yes, the most of them have—wives or slaves."

"Slaves?" he asked incredulously.

"Actually slaves, though they do not bring the high prices we used to ask for those of darker skin in the South. Emancipation has not made much progress up here. It is too much an unknown corner as yet."

"Is it inferior tribes that are bartered, or prisoners taken in battle?"

"No, I believe not, necessarily," she replied, "though I suppose such a windfall would be welcomed; but if there happens to be any superfluous members in a family, it is a profitable way to dispose of them,

among some of the Columbia Basin Indians, anyway. Davy MacDougall can give you more information than I, as most of my knowledge is second-hand. But I believe this tribe of the Kootenais is a grade above that sort of traffic— I mean bartering their own kindred."

"How long have you been out here, Miss Rachel?" he asked, as abruptly as she had questioned him of the white men.

"About a year—a little over."

"And you like it?"

"Yes; I like it."

In response to several demands, he had enthroned Miss Margaret on his lap by this time; and even there she was not contented. His head seemed to have a special fascination for her babyship; and she had such an insinuating way of snuggling upward that she was soon close in his arms, her hands in easy reach of his hair, which she did not pull in infantile fashion, but dallied with, and patted caressingly. There was no mistaking the fact that Stuart was prime favorite here at all events; and the affection was not one-sided by any means—unless the man was a thorough actor. His touch, his voice even, acquired a caressing way when Miss Margaret was to be pleased or appeased. Rachel, speaking to Tillie of it, wondered if his attraction was to children in general or to this one in particular; and holding the baby that her soft, pink cheek was against his own, he seemed ruminating over the girl's replies, and after a little—

"Yes, you must, of course," he said thoughtfully; "else you could never make yourself seem so much a part of it as you do."

During the interval of silence the girl's thoughts

had been wandering. She had lost the slight thread of their former topic, and looked a little at sea.

"A part of what?" she asked.

"Why, the life here. You seem as if you had always belonged to it—a bit of local color in harmony with the scenes about us."

"How flattering!—charmingly expressed!" murmured Miss Hardy derisively. "A bit of local color? Then, in Mr. Stuart's impressions I may look forward to finding myself catalogued among greasy squaws and picturesque squaw men."

"You seem to take a great deal of delight in turning all I say or do into ridicule," he observed. "You do it on the principle of the country that guys a 'tenderfoot;' and that is just one of the things that stamp you as a belonging of the life here. I try to think of you as a Kentucky girl transplanted, but even the fancy eludes me. You impress one as belonging to this soil, and more than that, showing a disposition to freeze out new-comers."

"I haven't frozen you out."

"No—thanks to my temperament that refuses to congeal. I did not leave all my warmth in the South."

"Meaning that I did?"

"Meaning that you, for some reason appear to have done so."

"Dear me, what a subtle personage you make of me! Come here, Margaret; this analyst is likely to prejudice you against your only auntie."

"Let her be with me," he said softly, as the baby's big blue eyes turned toward Rachel, and then were screened by heavy, white lids; "she is almost asleep—little darling. Is she not a picture? See how she clings to my finger—so tight;" and then he dropped

his face until his lips touched the soft cheek. "It is a child to thank God for," he said lovingly.

The girl looked at him, surprised at the thrill of feeling in his tones.

"You spoke like a woman just then," she said, her own voice changed slightly; "like a—a mother—a parent."

"Did I?" he asked, and arose with the child in his arms to deliver it to Aunty Luce. "Perhaps I felt so; is that weakness an added cause for trying to bar me out from the Kootenai hills?"

But he walked away without giving her a chance to reply.

She saw nothing more of him until evening, and then he was rather quiet, sitting beside Tillie and Miss Margaret, with occasional low-toned remarks to them, but not joining in the general conversation.

"What a queer remark that was for a man to make!" thought Rachel, looking at him across the room;—"a young man especially;" and that started her to thinking of his age, about which people would have widely different opinions. To see him sometimes, laughing and joking with the rest, he looked a boy of twenty. To hear him talking of scientific researches in his own profession and others, of the politics of the day, or literature of the age, one would imagine him at least forty. But sitting quiet, his face in repose, yet looking tired, his eyes so full of life, yet steeped in reveries, the rare mouth relaxed, unsmiling, then he looked what he probably was, thought the girl—about thirty; but it was seldom that he looked like that.

"Therefore," reasoned this feminine watcher, "it is seldom that we see him as he really is; query—why?"

"Perhaps I felt as a parent feels!" How frank his words had been, and how unlike most men he was, to give utterance to that thought with so much feeling, and how caressing to the child! Rachel had to acknowledge that he was original in many ways, and the ways were generally charming. His affections were so warm, so frankly bestowed; yet that gracious, tender manner of his, even when compared with the bluntness of the men around him, never made him seem effeminate.

Rachel, thinking of his words, wondered if he had a sweetheart somewhere, that made him think of a possible wife or children longingly—and if so, how that girl must love him!

So, despite her semi-warlike attitude, and her delight in thwarting him, she had appreciation enough of his personality to understand how possible it was for him to be loved deeply.

Jim, under Miss Hardy's tuition, had been making an attempt to "rope in" an education, and that night was reading doubtfully the history of our Glorious Republic in its early days; garnishing the statements now and then with opinions of his own, especially the part relating to the character of the original lords of the soil.

"Say, Miss Rache, yer given' me a straight tip on this lay-out?" he said at last, shutting the book and eying her closely.

The question aroused her from the contemplation of the Hermes-like head opposite, though she had, like Hardy, been pretending to read.

"Do you mean, is it true?" she asked.

"Naw!" answered Jim, with the intonation of supreme disgust; "I hain't no call to ask that; but

what I'm curious about is whether the galoot as wrote the truck lied by accident—someone sort o' playen' it on him, ye see—er whether he thought the rest o' creation was chumps from away back, an' he just naturally laid himself out to sell them cheap—now say, which is it?"

In vain his monitor tried to impress on his mind the truth of the chronicles, and the fact that generations ago the Indian could be truly called a noble man, until his child-like faith in the straight tongue of the interloper had made a net for their feet, to escape which they had recourse only to treachery and the tomahawk, thus carving in history a character that in the beginning was not theirs, but one into which they were educated by the godly people who came with their churches and guns, their religion and whisky, to civilize the credulous people of the forests.

Jim listened, but in the supercilious disbelief in his eyes Rachel read the truth. In trying to establish historical facts for his benefit, she was simply losing ground in his estimation at every statement made.

"An' you," he finally remarked, after listening in wonderful silence for him,— "an' you've read it all, then?"

"Yes, most of it."

"An' swallowed it as gospel?"

"Well, not exactly such literal belief as that; but I have read not only this history, but others in support of those facts."

"Ye have, have yeh?" remarked her pupil, with a sarcastic contempt of her book-learning. "Well, I allow this one will do me a life-time, fer *I've seen* Flatheads, *an'* Diggers, *an'* Snakes!"

And thus ended the first lesson in history.

"Don't you think," said Tillie softly to Stuart, "that Rachel would win more glory as a missionary to the Indians than among her own race? She is always running against stumbling-blocks of past knowledge with the progressive white man."

Rachel cast one silencing glance at the speaker; Tillie laughed.

"Never mind," she said reassuringly; "I will say nothing about your other attempt, and I only hope you will be willing to confine yourself to the Indians near home, and not start out to see some Flatheads, and Diggers, and Snakes for yourself."

"Lawd bress yeh, honey!" spoke up Aunty Luce, whose ears were always open to anything concerning their red neighbors; "don' yo' go to putten' no sech thoughts in her haid. Miss Rache needs tamen' down, she do, 'stead o' 'couragement."

"Well, it's precious little encouragement I get here, except to grow rusty in everything," complained Rachel. "A crusade against even the Diggers would be a break in the monotony. I wish I had gone with you to the Kootenai village, Mr. Stuart; that would have been a diversion."

"But rather rough riding," he added; "and much of the life, and—well, there is a great deal one would not care to take a lady to see."

"You don't know how Rachel rides," said Tillie, with a note of praise in her voice; "she rides as hard as the men on the ranch. You must go together for a ride, some day. She knows the country very well already."

But Rachel was thinking of the other part of his speech.

"I should not have asked to be taken," she said, "but would have gone on my own independence, as one of the party."

"Then your independence would have led you to several sights revolting to a refined nature," he said seriously, "and you would have wished yourself well out of it."

"Well, the Kootenais are several degrees superior to other tribes of the Columbia Basin; so you had better fight shy of Jim's knowledge. Why," she added, with a little burst of indignation that their good points were so neglected, "the Kootenais are a self-supporting people, asking nothing of the Government. They are independent traders."

"Say, Miss Rachel," broke in Jim, "was Kalitan a Kootenai Injun?"

"No, though he lived with them often. He was of the Gros Ventres, a race that belongs to the plains rather than the hills."

"You are already pretty well posted about the different tribes," observed Stuart.

"Yes, the Lawd knows—humph!" grunted Aunty Luce, evidently thinking the knowledge not a thing to be proud of.

"Oh, yes," smiled Tillie, "Rachel takes easily to everything in these hills. You should hear her talking Chinook to a blanket brave, or exchanging compliments with her special friend, the Arrow."

"The Arrow? That is a much more suggestive title than the Wahoosh, Kah-kwa, Sipah, and some other equally meaningless names I jotted down as I heard them up there."

"They are only meaningless to strangers," answered the girl. "They all have their own significance."

"Why, this same Arrow is called Kalitan," broke in Jim; "an' what'd you make out of that? Both names mean just the same thing. He was called that even when he was a little fellow, he said, 'cause he could run like a streak. Why, he used to make the trip down to the settlement an' be back here with the mail afore supper, makin' his forty miles afoot after breakfast; how's that for movin' over rough country?"

The swiftness did not seem to make the desired impression, his listener catching, instead, at the fact of their having had an Indian mail-carrier.

"And where is your Indian messenger of late?" he asked. "He has not visited you since my arrival, has he?"

"No; he left this country months ago," said Rachel. "Kalitan is a bit of a wanderer—never long in one place."

"Davy MacDougall says he'd allus loaf around here if Genesee would, but he's sure to go trottin' after Genesee soon as he takes a trail."

"That is the Indian you spoke of this morning, is it not?" asked Stuart, looking at Rachel.

"What!" roared Jim; and Hardy, who was taking a nap behind a paper, awoke with a start. "Genesee an Injun! Well, that's good!" and he broke into shrill, boyish laughter. "Well, you ought to just say it to his face, that's all!"

"Is he not?" he asked, still looking at the girl, who did not answer.

"Oh, no," said Tillie; "he is a white man, a—a—well, he has lived with the Indians, I believe."

"I understood you to say he himself was an Indian." And Rachel felt the steady regard of those warm eyes, while she tried to look unconscious, and knew she was failing.

Hardy laughed, and shook himself rightly awake.

"Beg your pardon," he said, coming to the rescue, "but she didn't say so, only gave you the information that he was pure-blooded; and I should say he is—as much of a white man as you or I."

"Mine was the mistake," acknowledged Stuart, with his old easy manner once more; "but Miss Rachel's love of a joke did not let me fall into it without a leader. And may I ask who he is, this white man with the Indian name—what is he?"

Rachel answered him then, brusquely: "You saw a white man with the Kootenais, did you not—one who lives as they do, with a squaw wife, or slave? You described the specimen as more degraded than the Indians about him. Well, Genesee is one of the class to which that man belongs—a squaw man; and he is also an Indian by adoption. Do you think you would care for a closer acquaintance?"

Tillie opened her eyes wide at this sweeping denunciation of Genesee and his life, while even Hardy looked surprised; Rachel had always, before, something to say in his favor. But the man she questioned so curtly was the only one who did not change even expression. He evidently forgot to answer, but sat there looking at her, with a little smile in his eyes.

But once in bed, it did not keep her awake; and the gray morning crept in ere she opened her eyes, earlier than usual, and from a cause not usual—the sound in the yard of a man's voice singing snatches of song, ignoring the words sometimes, but continuing the air in low carols of music, such as speak so plainly of a glad heart. It was not yet sun-up, and she rebelled, drowsily, at the racket as she rolled over toward the window and looked out. There he was, tinker-

ing at something about his saddle, now and then whistling in mimicry of a bird swaying on a leafless reed in the garden. She could see the other men, out across the open space by the barn, moving around as usual, looking after the domestic stock; but until one has had a breakfast, no well-regulated individual is hilarious or demonstrative, and their movements, as she could see, were not marvels of fast locomotion. They looked as she felt, she thought, yawningly, and groped around for her shoes, and finding them, sat down on the side of the bed again and looked out at that musical worker in the yard.

She could hear Aunty Luce tinkling the dishes in the kitchen, and Tillie and Miss Margaret, in the next room, cooing over some love-story of dawn they were telling each other. All seemed drowsy and far off, except that penetrating, cheery voice outside.

"The de'il tak' him!" she growled, quoting MacDougall; "what does the fellow mean by shouting like that this time of the night? He is as much of a boy as Jim."

> "Here awa', there awa', wandering Willie.
> Here awa', there awa', haud awa' hame!"

warbled the Stuart, with an accent that suited his name; and the girl wakened up a bit to the remembrance of the old song, thinking, as she dressed, that, social and cheery as he often was, this was the first time she had ever heard him sing; and what a resonant, yet boyish, timbre thrilled through his voice. She threw up the window.

"Look here!" she said, with mock asperity, "we are willing to make some allowance for national enthusiasm, Mr. Charles, Prince of the Stuarts, but rebel at

Scotch love-songs shouted under our windows before daybreak."

"All right," he smiled, amiably. "I know one or two Irish ones, if you prefer them.

"Oh, acushla Mavourneen! won't you marry me?
Gramachree, Mavourneen; oh, won't you marry me?"

Click! went the window shut again, and from the inside she saw him looking up at the casement with eyes full of triumph and mischief. He was metamorphosed in some way. Yesterday he had been serious and earnest, returning from his hill trip with something like despondency, and now—

She remembered her last sight of him the night before, as he smiled at her from the stairway. Ah, yes, yes! all just because he had felt jubilant over outwitting her, or rather seeing chance do the work for him. Was it for that he was still singing? Had her instincts then told her truly when she had connected his presence with the memory of that older man's sombre eyes and dogged exile? Well, the exile was his own business, not that of anyone else—least of all that of this debonair individual, with his varying emotions.

And she went down the stairs with a resentful feeling against the light-hearted melody of "Acushla Mavourneen."

"Be my champion, Mrs. Hardy," he begged at the breakfast-table, "or I am tabooed forever by Miss Rachel."

"How so?"

"By what I intended as an act of homage, giving her a serenade at sunrise in the love-songs of my forefathers."

"Nonsense!" laughed Rachel. "He never knew what

his forefathers were until Davy MacDougall brushed up his history; and you have not thought much of the songs you were trying to sing, else you would know they belong to the people of the present and future as well as the past."

"Trying to sing!" was all the comment Mr. Stuart made, turning with an injured air to Tillie.

"Learn some Indian songs," advised that little conspirator impressively; "in the Kootenai country you must sing Chinook if you want to be appreciated."

"There speaks one who knows," chimed in Hardy lugubriously. "A year ago I had a wife and an undivided affection; but I couldn't sing Chinook, and the other fellow could, and for many consecutive days I had to take a back seat."

"Hen! How dare you?"

"In fact," he continued, unrestrained by the little woman's tones or scolding eyes, "I believe I have to thank jealousy for ever reinstating me to the head of the family."

"Indeed," remarked Stuart, with attention impressively flattering; "may I ask how it was effected?"

"Oh, very simply—very simply. Chance brought her the knowledge that there was another girl up the country to whom her hero sang Chinook songs, and, presto! she has ever since found English sufficient for all her needs."

And Tillie, finding she had enough to do to defend herself without teasing Rachel, gave her attention to her husband, and the girl turned to Stuart.

"All this gives no reason for your spasms of Scotch expression this morning," she reminded him.

"No? Well, my father confessor in the feminine, I was musical—beg pardon, tried to be—because I

awoke this morning with an unusually light heart; and I sang Scotch songs—or tried to sing them—because I was thinking of a Scotchman, and contemplating a visit to him to-day."

"Davy MacDougall?"

"The same."

"And you were with him only yesterday."

"And may say good-bye for a long time to him to-morrow."

"So you are going?" she asked, in a more subdued tone.

"I believe so!" And for the moment the question and answer made the two seem entirely alone, though surrounded by the others. Then she laughed in the old quizzical, careless way.

"I see now the inspiration to song and jubilance that prevented you from sleeping," she said, nodding her head sagaciously. "It was the thought of escaping from us and our isolated life. Is that it?"

"No, it is not," he answered earnestly. "My stay here has been a pleasure, and out of it I hope will grow something deeper—a happiness."

The feeling in the words made her look at him quickly. His eyes met her own, with some meaning back of their warmth that she did not understand. Nine girls out of ten would have thought the words and manner suggestive of a love declaration, and would at once have dropped their eyes in the prettiest air of confusion and been becomingly fluttered; but Rachel was the tenth, and her eyes were remarkably steady as she returned his glance with one of inquiry, and reached for another biscuit, and said:

"Yes?"

But the low tones and his earnestness had not

escaped the note of two pairs of eyes at the table—those of Mistress Tillie and Master Jim—both of them coming to about the same conclusion in the matter, the one that Rachel was flirting, and the other that Stuart 'had a bad case of spoons."

Many were the expostulations when, after breakfast, Hardy's guest informed him that his exit from their circle was likely to be almost as abrupt as his entrance had been. In vain was there held out to him the sport of their proposed hunt—every persuasive argument was met with a regretful refusal.

"I am sorry to put aside that pleasure," he answered; "but, to tell the truth, I scarcely realized how far the season has advanced. The snow will soon be deep in the mountains, they tell me, and before that time I must get across the country to Fort Owens. It is away from a railroad far enough to make awkward travel in bad weather, and I realize that the time is almost past when I can hope for dry days and sunshine; so, thinking it over last night, I felt I had better start as early as possible."

"You know nothing of the country in that direction?" asked Hardy.

"No more than I did of this; but an old school-fellow of mine is one of the officers there—Captain Sneath. I have not seen him for years, but can not consider my trip up here complete without visiting him; so, you see—"

"Better fight shy o' that territory," advised Andrews, chipping in with a cowboy's brief say-so. "Injun faction fights all through thar, an' its risky, unless ye go with a squad—a big chance to pack bullets."

"Then I shall have an opportunity of seeing life there under the most stirring circumstances," replied

Stuart in smiling unconcern, "for in time of peace a military post is about the dullest place one can find."

"To be sure," agreed his adviser, eying him dubiously; "an' if ye find yerself sort o' pinin' for the pomp o' war, as I heard an actor spoutin' about once, in a theatre at Helena—well, down around Bitter Root River, an' up the Nez Perce Fork, I reckon you'll find a plenty o' it jest about this time o' year."

"And concluding as I have to leave at once," resumed Stuart, turning to Hardy, "I felt like taking a ride up to MacDougall's for a good-bye. I find myself interested in the old man, and would not like to leave without seeing him again."

"I rather think I've got to stay home to-day," said his host ruefully, "else I would go with you; but—"

"Not a word of your going," broke in Stuart; "do you think I've located here for the purpose of breaking up your routine of stock and agricultural schemes? Not a bit of it! I'm afraid, as it is, your hospitality has caused them to suffer; so not a word of an escort. I wouldn't take a man from the place, so—"

"What about a woman?" asked Rachel, with a challenging glance that was full of mischief. For a moment he looked at a loss for a reply, and she continued: "Because I don't mind taking a ride to Davy MacDougall's my own self. As you say, the sunny days will be few now, and I may not have another chance for weeks; so here I am, ready to guide you, escort you, and guard you with my life."

So what was there left for the man to say?

"What possessed you to go to-day, Rachel?" asked Tillie dubiously. "Do you think it is quite—"

"Oh, yes, dear—quite," returned that young lady confidently; "and you need not assume that anxious air regarding either the proprieties or my youthful affections, for, to tell the truth, I am impelled to go through sheer perversity; not because your latest favorite wants me, but simply because he does not."

And they were mounted and clattering away over the crisp, bronze turf twenty minutes after her offer. To Stuart the task of entertaining a lady whose remarks to him seldom verged from the ironical was anything but a sinecure—more, it was easy to see that he was unused to it; and an ungallant query to himself was: "Why did she come, anyway?" He had not heard her reply to Tillie.

The air was crisp and cold enough to make their heavy wraps a comfort, especially when they reached the higher land; the sun was showing fitfully, low-flying, skurrying clouds often throwing it in eclipse.

"Snow is coming," prophesied the girl, with a weather-eye to the north, where the sky was banking up in pale-gray masses; "perhaps not heavy enough to impede your trip south, to Owens, but that bit over there looks like a visiting-card of winter."

"How weather-wise you are!" he observed. "Now I had noticed not the slightest significance in all that; in fact, you seem possessed of several Indian accomplishments—their wood-lore, their language, their habit of going to nature instead of an almanac; and did not Mrs. Hardy say you knew some Indian songs? Who taught you them?"

"Songs came near getting us into a civil war at breakfast," she observed, "and I am not sure that the ground is any more safe around Indian than Scotch ones."

"There is something more substantial of the former race," he said, pointing ahead.

It was the hulking figure of a Siwash, who had seen them first and tried to dodge out of sight, and failing, halted at the edge of a little stream.

"Hostile?" queried Stuart, relying more on his companion's knowledge than his own; but she shook her head.

"No; from the Reservation, I suppose. He doesn't look like a blanket brave. We will see."

Coming within speaking distance, she hailed him across the divide of the little stream, and got in reply what seemed to Stuart an inextricable mass of staccatos and gutturals.

"He is a Kootenai," she explained, "and wants to impress on our minds that he is a good Indian."

"He does not look good for much," was the natural remark of the white man, eying Mr. Kootenai critically; "even on his native heath he is not picturesque."

"No—poor imp!" agreed the girl; "with winter so close, their concern is more how they are to live than how they appear to people who have no care for them."

She learned he was on his way south to the Flathead Reservation; so he had evidently solved the question of how he intended living for the winter, at all events. He was, however, short of ammunition. When Rachel explained his want, Stuart at once agreed to give him some.

"Don't be in a hurry!" advised his commander-in-chief; "wait until we know how it is that he has no ammunition, and so short a distance from his tribe. An Indian can always get that much if he is not too lazy to hunt or trap, or is not too much of a thief."

But she found the noble red man too proud to answer many questions of a squaw. The fear, however, of hostilities from the ever-combative Blackfeet seemed to be the chief moving cause.

"Rather a weak-backed reason," commented Rachel; "and I guess you can dig roots from here to the Reservation. No powder, no shot."

"Squaw—papoose—sick," he added, as a last appeal to sympathy.

"Where?"

He waved a dirty hand up the creek.

"Go on ahead; show us where they are."

His hesitation was too slight to be a protest, but still there was a hesitation, and the two glanced at each other as they noticed it.

"I don't believe there is either squaw or papoose," decided Stuart. "Lo is a romancer."

But there was, huddled over a bit of fire, and holding in her arms a little bundle of bronze flesh and blood. It was, as the Indian had said, sick—paroxysms of shivers assailing it from time to time.

"Give me your whisky-flask!" Rachel said promptly; and dismounting, she poured some in the tin cup at her saddle and set it on the fire—the blue, sputtering flame sending the odor of civilization into the crisp air. Cooling it to suit baby's lips, she knelt beside the squaw, who had sat stolidly, taking no notice of the newcomers; but as the girl's hand was reached to help the child she raised her head, and then Rachel knew who she was.

They did not speak, but after a little of the warm liquor had forced itself down the slight throat, Rachel left the cup in the mother's hands, and reached again for the whisky.

"You can get more from Davy MacDougall," she said, in a half-conciliatory tone at this wholesale confiscation; "and—and you might give him some ammunition—not much."

"What a vanishing of resolves!" he remarked, measuring out an allowance of shot; "and all because of a copper-colored papoose. So you have a bit of natural, womanly weakness?"

The girl did not answer; there was a certain air of elation about her as she undid a scarf from her throat and wrapped it about the little morsel of humanity.

"Go past the sheep ranch," she directed the passive warrior, who stood gazing at the wealth in whisky and powder. "Do you know where it is—Hardy's? Tell them I sent you— show them that," and she pointed to the scarf; "tell them what you need for squaw and papoose; they will find it."

Skulking Brave signified that he understood, and then led Betty toward her.

"He is not very hospitable," she confided to Stuart, in the white man's tongue, "else he would not be in such haste to get rid of us."

And although their host did not impress one as having a highly strung nervous organization, yet his manner during their halt gave them the idea that he was ill at ease. They did not tarry long, but having given what help they could, rode away, lighter of whisky and ammunition, and the girl, strange enough, seemed lighter of heart.

After they had reached a point high above the little creek, they turned for a look over the country passed. It lay in brown and blue-gray patches, with, on the highlands, dashes of dark-green where the pines grew.

"What is the white thing moving along that line of timber?" asked the girl, pointing in the direction they had come. It was too far off to see clearly, but with the aid of Stuart's field-glass, it was decided to be the interesting family they had stopped with a little ways back. And the white thing noticed was a horse they were riding. It was getting over the ground at the fastest rate possible with its triple weight, for the squaw was also honored with a seat back of her lord.

"I imagined they were traveling on foot, didn't you?" asked Stuart.

"What a fool he was to steal a white horse!" remarked the girl contemptuously; "he might know it would be spotted for miles."

CHAPTER IV.

A TRIO IN WITCHLAND.

The noon was past when they reached the cabin on Scot's Mountain, and found its owner on the point of leaving for the Maple range. But quickly replacing his gun on its pegs, he uncovered the fire, set on the coffee-pot, and, with Rachel's help, had, in a very short time, a steaming-hot dinner of broiled bear steaks and "corn-dodgers," with an additional delicacy in a bowl of honey from the wild bees' store.

"I have some laid by as a bit of a gift to Mr. Hardy's lady," he confided to Rachel. "I found this fellow," tapping the steak, "in one o' the traps as I was a-comin' my way home; an' the fresh honey on his paws helped me smell out where he had spied it, and a good lot o' it there was that Mr. Grizzly had na reached."

"See here," said Stuart, noting that the old man had relinquished, because of their visit, all idea of going to the woods, "we must not interfere with your plans, for at the best we have but a short time to stay." And then he explained the reason.

And when the question of snow was taken into account, Davy agreed that Stuart's decision was perhaps wise; but "he was main sorry o' the necessity."

"An' it's to Owens ye be taken' the trail?" he asked. "Eh, but that's curious now. I have a rare an' good friend thereabouts that I would be right glad to send a word to; an' I was just about to take a look at his

tunnel an' the cabin, when ye come the day, just to see it was all as it should be ere the snows set in."

"I would be delighted to be of any service to you," said Stuart warmly; "and to carry a message is a very slight one. Who is your friend?"

"It's just the man Genesee, who used to be my neighbor. But he's left me alone now these many months—about a year;" and he turned to Rachel for corroboration.

"More than a year," she answered briefly.

"Well, it is now. I'm losin' track o' dates these late days; but you're right, lass, an' the winter would ha' been ower lonely if it had na been for yourself. Think o' that, Charlie Stuart: this slim bit o' womankind substituting herself for a rugged build o' a man taller than you by a half-head, an' wi' no little success, either. But," he added teasingly, "ye owed me the debt o' your company for the sending o' him away; so ye were only honest after all, Rachel Hardy."

Rachel laughed, thinking it easier, perhaps, to dispose of the question thus than by any disclaimer—especially with the eyes of Stuart on her as they were.

"You are growing to be a tease," she answered. "You will be saying I sent Kalitan and Talapa, next."

"But Talapa has na gone from the hills?"

"Hasn't she? Well, I saw her on the trail, going direct south, this morning, as fast as she could get over the ground, with, as companions, a warrior and a papoose."

"Did ye now? Well, good riddance to them. They ha' been loafing around the Kootenai village ever since I sent them from the cabin in the summer.

That Talapa was a sleepy-eyed bit o' old Nick. I told Genesee that same from the first, when he was wasting his stock o' pity on her. Ye see," he said, turning his speech to Stuart, "a full-blooded Siwash has some redeeming points, and a character o' their own; but the half-breeds are a part white an' a part red, with a good wheen o' the devil's temper thrown in."

"She didn't appear to have much of the last this morning," observed Rachel. "She looked pretty miserable."

"Ah, well, tak' the best o' them, an' they look that to the whites. An' so they're flittin' to the Reservation to live off the Government? Skulking Bob'll be too lazy to be even takin' the chance o' fightin' with his people against the Blackfeet, if trouble should come; and there's been many a straggler from the rebels makin' their way north to the Blackfeet, an' that is like to breed mischief."

"And your friend is at Owens?"

"Yes—or thereabouts. One o' the foremost o' their scouts, they tell me, an' a rare good one he is, with no prejudice on either side o' the question."

"I should think, being a white man, his sympathies would lean toward his own race," observed Stuart.

"Well, that's as may chance. There's many the man who finds his best friends in strange blood. Genesee is thought no little of among the Kootenais —more, most like, than he would be where he was born and bred. Folk o' the towns know but little how to weigh a man."

"And is he from the cities?"

For the first time Davy MacDougall looked up quickly.

"I know not," he answered briefly, "an', not giving

to you a short answer, I care not. Few questions make long friends in the hills."

Stuart was somewhat nonplussed at the bluntness of the hint, and Rachel was delighted.

"You see," she reminded him wickedly, "one can be an M. D., an L. S. D., or any of the annexations, without Kootenai people considering his education finished. But look here, Davy MacDougall, we only ran up to say *'kalhowya,'* and have got to get back to-night; so, if you are going over to *Tamahnous* cabin, don't stop on our account; we can go part of the way with you."

"But ye can go all the way, instead o' but a part, an' then no be out o' your road either," he said, with eagerness that showed how loath he was to part from his young companions. "Ye know," he added, turning to Rachel, "it is but three miles by the cross-cut to Genesee's, while by the valley ye would cover eight on the way. Now, the path o'er the hills is no fit for the feet o' a horse, except it be at the best o' seasons; but this is an ower good one, with neither the rain nor the ice; an' if ye will risk it—"

Of course they would risk it; and with a draught apiece from an odorous, dark-brown jug, and the gift of a flask that found its way to Stuart's pocket, they started.

And they needed that swallow of brandy as a brace against the cold wind of the hills. It hustled through the pines like winged fiends let loose from the north. Dried berries from the bushes and cones from the trees were sent pattering to sleep for the winter, and the sighs through the green roofing, and the moans from twisted limbs, told of the hardihood needed for life up there. The idea impressed Stuart so much that he

gave voice to it, and was laughed at grimly by the old mountaineer.

"Oh, well, it just takes man to be man, an' that's all when all's said," he answered. "To be sure, there be times when one canna stir for the snow wreaths, but that's to be allowed for; an' then ye may ha' took note that my cabin is in shelter o' all but the south wind, an' that's a great matter. Men who live in the mountain maun get used to its frolics; but it's an ugly bit," he acknowledged, as they stopped to rest and look up over the seemingly pathless way they had come; "but I've been thankful for it many's the time, when, unlooked for, Genesee and Mowitza would show their faces at my door, an' she got so she could make that climb in the dark—think o' that! Ah, but she was the wise one!"

Stuart glanced at Rachel, who was more likely than himself to understand who was meant by the "wise one;" but he did not venture again on a question. Mowitza was another squaw, he supposed, and one of the companions of the man Genesee. And the other one they had passed in the morning?—her name also was connected with the scout whom the white girl seemed to champion or condemn as the fancy pleased her. And Stuart, as a stranger to the social system of the wilderness, had his curiosity widely awakened. And a good deal of it was directed to Rachel herself. Hearing MacDougall speak of the man to her, he could understand that she had no lack of knowledge in that direction—and the direction was one of which the right sort of a girl was supposed to be ignorant; or, if not ignorant, to at least conceal her wisdom in the wise way of her sisters.

But this one did nothing of the sort; and the

series of new impressions received made him observe the girl with a scrutiny not so admiring as he had always, until now, given her. He was irritated with himself that it was so, yet his ideas of what a woman should be were getting some hard knocks at her hands.

Suddenly the glisten of the little lake came to them through the gray trunks of the trees, and a little later they had descended the series of small circular ridges that terraced the cove from the timber to the waters, that was really not much more than an immense spring that happened to bubble up where there was a little depression to spread itself in and show to advantage.

"But a mill would be easily turned by that same bit o' water," observed MacDougall; "an' there's where Genesee showed the level head in locating his claim where he did."

"It looks like wasted power, placed up here," observed Stuart, "for it seems about the last place in Christendom for a mill."

"Well, so it may look to many a pair o' eyes," returned the old man, with a wink and a shrug that was indescribable in action, but suggested a vast deal of unuttered knowledge; "but the lad who set store by it because o' the water-power was a long ways from a fool, I can tell ye."

And again Stuart found himself trying to count the spokes of some shadowy wheels within wheels that had a trick of eluding him; and he felt irritatingly confident that the girl looking at him with quizzical, non-committal eyes could have enlightened him much as to the absent ruler of this domain, who, according to her own words, was utterly degraded, yet had

a trick of keeping his personality such a living thing after a year's absence.

The cabin was cold with the chill dreariness of any house that is left long without the warmth of an embodied human soul. Only the wandering, homeless spirits of the air had passed in and out, in and out of its chinks, sighing through them for months, until, on entrance, one felt an intuitive, sympathetic shiver for their loneliness.

A fire was soon crackling on the hearth; but the red gleams did not dance so merrily on the rafters as they had done the first time she had been warmed at the fire-place—the daylight was too merciless a rival. It penetrated the corners with the rude bunk and some mining implements; from a rafter hung a roll of skins done up in bands of some pliable withes.

Evidently Genesee's injunction had been obeyed; for even the pottery, and reed baskets, and bowls still shone from the box of shelves.

"It's a mystery to me those things are not stolen by the Indians," observed Stuart, noticing the lack of any fastening on the door, except a bar on the inside.

"There's no much danger o' that," said the old man grimly, "unless it be by a Siwash who knows naught o' the country. The Kootenai people would do no ill to Genesee, nor would any Injun when he lives in the *Tamahnous* ground."

"What territory is that?"

"Just the territory o' witchcraft—no less. The old mine and the spring, with the circle o' steps down to it, they let well alone, I can tell ye; and as for steal-in', they'd no take the worth o' a tenpenny nail from between the two hills that face each other, an' the rocks o' them gives queer echoes that they canna

explain. Oh, yes, they have their witches, an' their warlocks, an' enchanted places, an' will no go against their belief, either."

"But," said Rachel, with a slight hesitation, "Talapa was not afraid to live here."

"An' did ye not know, then, that she was not o' Kootenai stock?" asked the old man. "Well, she was not a bit o' it; Genesee bought her of a beast of a Blackfoot."

"Bought her?" asked Stuart, and even Rachel opened her eyes in attention—perhaps, after all, not knowing so much as the younger man had angrily given her credit for.

"Just that; an' dear she would ha' been at most any price. But she was a braw thing to look at, an' young enough to be sorry o'er. An' so when he come across her taken' a beating like a mule he could na stand it; an' the only way he could be sure o' putting an end to it was by maken' a bargain; an' that's just what he did, an' a'most afore he had time to take thought, the girl was his, an' he had to tek her with him. Well," and the old man laughed comically at the remembrance, "you should ha' seen him at the comin' home!—tried to get her off his hands by leavin' her an' a quitclaim at my cabin; but I'd have none o' that—no half-breed woman could stay under a roof o' mine; an' the finish o' it was he hed to bring her here to keep house for him, an' a rueful commencement it was. Then it was but a short while 'til he got hurt one day in the tunnel, an' took a deal o' care before he was on his feet again. Well, ye know womankind make natural nurses, an' by the time she had him on the right trail again he had got o' the mind that Talapa was a necessity o' the cabin; an' so ye may know she staid."

"In what tunnel was he injured?" asked Stuart.

"Why, just—"

"There's your horse ranging calmly up toward the timber," observed Rachel, turning from the window to Stuart. "Do you want to walk to the ranch?"

"Well, not to-day;" and a moment later he was out the door and running across the terraced meadow.

"Don't tell him too much about the tunnel," suggested the girl, when she and the old man were alone.

"Why, lass,"— he began; but she cut him short brusquely, keeping her eye on the form on the hill-side.

"Oh, he may be all right; but it isn't like you, Davy MacDougall, to tell all you know to strangers, even if they do happen to have Scotch names—you clannish old goose!"

"But the lad's all right."

"May be he is; but you've told him enough of the hills now to send him away thinking we are all a rather mixed and objectionable lot. Oh, yes, he does too!" as Davy tried to remonstrate. "I don't care how much you tell him about the Indians; but that tunnel may have something in it that Genesee wouldn't want Eastern speculators spying into while he's away—do you see?"

Evidently he did, and the view was not one flattering to his judgment, for, in order to see more clearly, he took off his fur cap, scratched his head, and then replacing the covering with a great deal of energy, he burst out:

"Well, d—n a fool, say I."

Rachel paid not the slightest attention to this profane plea.

"I suppose he's all right," she continued; "only when somebody's interest is at stake, especially a

friend's, we oughtn't to take things for granted, and keeping quiet hurts no one, unless it be a stranger's curiosity."

The old man looked at her sharply. "Ye dinna like him, then?"

She hesitated, her eyes on the tall form leading back the horse. Just then there seemed a strange likeness to Mowitza and Genesee in their manner, for the beast was tossing its head impatiently, and he was laughing, evidently teasing it with the fact of its capture.

"Yes, I do like him," she said at last; "there is much about him to like. But we must not give away other people's affairs because of that."

"Right you are, my lass," answered Davy; "an' it's rare good sense ye show in remindin' me o' the same. It escapes me many's the time that he's a bit of a stranger when all's said; an' do ye know, e'en at the first he had no the ways of a stranger to me. I used to fancy that something in his build, or it may ha' been but the voice, was like to—"

"You are either too old or not old enough to have fancies, Davy MacDougall," interrupted the girl briskly, as Stuart re-entered. "Well, is it time to be moving?"

He looked at his watch.

"Almost; but come to the fire and get well warmed before we start. I believe it grows colder; here, take this seat."

"Well, I will not," she answered, looking about her; "don't let your gallantry interfere with your comfort, for I've a chair of my own when I visit this witchy quarter of the earth—yes, there it is."

And from the corner by the bunk she drew forward

the identical chair on which she had sat through the night at her only other visit. But from her speech Stuart inferred that this time was but one of the many.

"What are you going to do here, Davy MacDougall?" she asked, drawing her chair close beside him and glancing comprehensively about the cabin; "weather-board it up for winter?"

"Naw, scarcely that," he answered good-humoredly; "but just to gather up the blankets or skins, or aught that the weather or the rats would lay hold of, and carry them across the hills to my own camp till the spring comes; mayhaps he may come with it."

But the hope was not very strong in his voice, and the plaintiveness in it was stronger than he knew. The other two felt it, and were silent.

"An' will ye be tellin' him for me," he continued, after a little, to Stuart, "that all is snug an' safe, an' that I'll keep them so, an' a welcome with them, against his return? An' just mention, too, that his father, Grey Eagle, thinks the time is long since he left, an' that the enemy—Time—is close on his trail. An'—an' that the day he comes back will be holiday in the hills."

"The last from Grey Ealge or yourself?" asked Stuart teasingly. But the girl spoke up, covering the old man's momentary hesitation.

"From me," she said coolly; "if any name is needed to give color to so general a desire, you can use mine."

His face flushed; he looked as if about to speak to her, but, instead, his words were to MacDougall.

"I will be very glad to carry the word to your friend," he said; "it is but a light weight."

"Yes, I doubt na it seems so to the carrier, but I would no think it so light a thing to ha' word o' the

lad. We ha' been neighbors, ye see, this five year, with but little else that was civilized to come near us. An' there's a wide difference atween neighbors o' stone pavements an' neighbors o' the hills—a fine difference."

"Yes, there is," agreed the girl; and from their tones one would gather the impression that all the splendors of a metropolis were as nothing when compared with the luxuries of "shack" life in the "bush."

"Can ye hit the trail down at the forks without me along?" asked MacDougall, with a sudden remembrance of the fact that Rachel did not know the way so well from the "Place of the Tamahnous" as she did from Scot's Mountain. But she nodded her head independently.

"I can, Davy MacDougall. And you are paying me a poor compliment when you ask me so doubtfully. I've been prowling through the bush enough for this past year to know it for fifty miles around, instead of twenty. And now if your highness thinks we've had our share of this fire, let us 'move our freight,' 'hit the breeze,' or any other term of the woolly West that means action, and get up and git."

"I am at your service," answered Stuart, with a graciousness of manner that made her own bravado more glaring by contrast. He could see she assumed much for the sake of mischief and irritation to himself; and his tone in reply took an added intonation of refinement; but the hint was lost on her—she only laughed.

"I tell you what it is, Davy MacDougall," she remarked to that gentleman, "this slip of your nation has been planted in the wrong century. He belongs to the age of lily-like damsels in sad-colored frocks, and knights of high degree on bended knee and their

armor hung to the rafters. I get a little mixed in my dates sometimes, but believe it was the age when caps and bells were also in fashion."

"Dinna mind her at all," advised the old man; "she'd be doin' ye a good turn wi' just as ready a will as she would mak' sport o' ye. Do I not know her?— ah, but I do!"

"So does the Stuart," said Rachel; "and as for doing him a good turn, I proved my devotion in that line this morning, when I saved him from a lonely, monotonous ride—didn't I?" she added, glancing up at him.

"You look positively impish," was the only reply he made; and returning her gaze with one that was half amusement, half vexation, he went out for the horses.

"You see, he didn't want me at all, Davy MacDougall," confided the girl, and if she felt any chagrin she concealed it admirably. "But they've been talking some about Genesee down at the ranch, and—and Stuart's interest was aroused. I didn't know how curious he might be—Eastern folks are powerful so"— and in the statement and adoption of vernacular she seemed to forget how lately she was of the East herself; "and I concluded he might ask questions, or encourage you to talk about—well, about the tunnel, you know; so I just came along to keep the trail free of snags—see?"

The old man nodded, and watched her in a queer, dubious way; as she turned, a moment later, to speak to Stuart at the door, she noticed it, and laughed.

"You think I'm a bit loony, don't you, Davy MacDougall? Well, I forgive you. May be, some day, you'll see I'm not on a blind trail. Come and see us soon, and give me a chance to prove my sanity."

"Strange that any mind could doubt it," murmured Stuart. "Come, we haven't time for proofs of the question now. Good-bye, MacDougall; take care of yourself for the winter. Perhaps I'll get back in the summer to see how well you have done so."

A hearty promise of welcome, a hand-clasp, a few more words of admonition and farewell, and then the two young people rode away across the ground deemed uncanny by the natives; and the old man went back to his lonely task.

On reaching the ranch at dusk, it was Rachel who was mildly hilarious, seeming to have changed places with the gay chanter of the dawn. He was not sulky, but something pretty near it was in his manner, and rather intensified under Miss Hardy's badinage.

She told the rest of him dividing his whisky with the squaw; hinted at a fear that he intended adopting the papoose; gave them an account of the conversation between himself and Skulking Brave; and otherwise made their trip one of ridicule.

"Did you meet with Indians?" asked Tillie, trying to get the girl down to authentic statements.

"Yes, my dear, we did, and I sent them home to you —or told them to come; but they evidently had not time for morning calls."

"Were they friendly?"

"Pretty much—enough so to ask for powder and shot. None of the men sighted them?"

"No."

"And no other Indians?"

"No—why?"

"Only that I would not like Talapa to be roughly unhorsed."

"Talapa! Why, Rachel, that's—"

"Yes, of course it is—with a very promising family in tow. Say, suppose you hustle Aunty up about that supper, won't you? And have her give the Stuart something extra nice; he has had a hard day of it."

CHAPTER V.

A VISIT IN THE NIGHT-TIME.

Yahka kelapie.

The snows had dropped a soft cloak over the Kootenai hills, and in the valleys lay in great beds of crystallized down. Rachel's prophecy had proven a true one, for the clouds that day had been a visiting-card from winter.

That day was two weeks old now; so was Stuart's leave-taking, and at the ranch life had dropped into the old lines, but with an impression of brightness lost. Miss Margaret had not yet got over the habit of turning quickly if anyone entered the room, and showing her disappointment in a frown when it was not the one looked for.

Aunty Luce declared she "nevah did see a chile so petted on one who wasn't no kin."

All of them discovered they had been somewhat "petted" on the genial nature. The evenings were again passed with magazines or cards; during his stay there had been revived the primitive custom of taking turns telling stories, and in that art Stuart had proven himself a master, sometimes recounting actual experiences of self or friends, again giving voice to some remembered gem of literature; but, whatever the theme, there was given to it life, through the sympathetic tendencies of the man who had so much the timber of an actor—or rather an artist—the spirit that tends to reproduce or create.

If Rachel missed him, she kept quiet about it, and ridiculed the rest if any regrets came to her ears. But no one minded that much; Rachel ridiculed everyone —even herself. Sometimes she thought Fate seemed more than willing to help her. One night, two weeks after that ride from the "Place of the Tamahnous," she was struck with a new conviction of the fact.

Andrews had gone to Holland's for the mail and domestic miscellany. A little after sun-up he had started, and the darkness was three hours old, and yet no sign or sound. The rest had finally given up the idea of getting any letters that night, and had gone to bed. As usual, Rachel—the night-owl of the family—was left the last guard at the warm hearth. Upstairs she could hear Jim's voice in the "boys'" room, telling Ivans some exploit whose character was denoted by one speech that made its way through the ceiling of pine boards:

"Yes, sir; my horse left his'n half a length behind every time it hit the ground."

Ivans grunted. Evidently he had listened to recitals from the same source before, and was too tired for close attention; anyway, the remarks of this Truthful James drifted into a monologue, and finally into silence, and no sound of life was left in the house.

She had been reading a book Stuart had sent back to her with Hardy, the day he left. She wondered a little why, for he had never spoken to her of it. It was a novel, a late publication, and by an author whose name she had seen affixed to magazine work; and the charm in it was undeniable—the charm of quiet hearts and restful pictures, that proved the writer a lover of the tender, sympathetic tones of life, rather than the storms and battles of human emotions.

And it had held the girl with a puzzling, unusual interest—one that in spite of her would revert from the expressed thoughts on the paper to the personality of the man who had sent it to her, and finding, in many instances, a mystifying likeness.

She sat there thinking drowsily over it, and filled with the conviction that it was really time to go tc bed; but the big chair was so comfortable, and the little simmer of the burning wood was like a lullaby, and she felt herself succumbing, without the slightest rebellion, to the restful influence. She was aroused by the banging of a door somewhere, and decided that Andrews had at last returned; and remembering the number of things he had to bring in, concluded to go out and help him. Her impulse was founded as much on economy as generosity, for the late hour was pretty good proof that Andrews was comfortably drunk—also that breakages were likely to be in order.

It was cloudy—only the snow gave light; the air was not cold, but had in it the soft ess of rain. Over it she walked quickly, fully awakened by the thought of the coffee getting a bath of vinegar, or the mail mucilaged together with molasses.

"Oh, here you are at last!" she remarked, in that inane way people have when they care not whether you are here or in the other place. "You took your own time."

"Well, I didn't take any other fellow's!" returned the man from the dark corner where he was unsaddling the horse.

Andrews was usually very obsequious to Miss Rachel, and she concluded he must be pretty drunk.

"I came out to help you with the things," she remarked from her post in the door-way; "where are they?"

"I've got 'em myself," came the gruff tones again from the corner. "I reckon I'll manage without help. You'd better skip for the house—you'll catch cold likely."

"Why, it isn't cold—are you? I guess Aunty left a lunch for you. I'll go and warm the coffee."

She started, and then stopped.

"Say, did you get any letters for me?"

"No."

With a grumble about her ill-luck, she started back toward the house, the late arrival following a little ways behind with something over his shoulder. Once she looked back.

"I rather think Andrews gets on dignified drunks," she soliloquized; "he is walking pretty straight, anyway."

She set the coffee-pot on the coals and glanced at the bundle he had dropped just inside the door—it was nothing but a blanket and a saddle.

"Well, upon my word!" she began, and rose to her feet; but she did not say any more, for, in turning to vent her displeasure on Andrews, she was tongue-tied by the discovery that it was not he who had followed her from the stable.

"Genesee!" she breathed, in a tone a little above a whisper. "*Alah mika chahko!*"

She was too utterly astonished to either move toward him or offer her hand; but the welcome in her Indian words was surely plain enough for him to understand. It was just like him, however, to not credit it, and he smiled a grim understanding of his own, and walked over to a chair.

"Yes, that's who it is," he remarked. "I am sorry, for the sake of your hopes, that it isn't the other fellow; but—here I am."

He had thrown his hat beside him and leaned back in the big chair, shutting his eyes sleepily. She had never seen him look so tired.

"*Tillikum*, I *am* glad to see you again," she said, going to him and holding out her hand. He smiled, but did not open his eyes

"It took you a long time to strike that trail," he observed. "What brought you out to the stable?"

"I thought you were Andrews, and that you were drunk and would break things."

"Oh!"

"And I *am* glad to see you, Jack."

He opened his eyes then. "Thank you, little girl. That is a good thing for a man to hear, and I believe you. Come here. It was a good thing for me to get that word from Kalitan, too. I reckon you know all that, though, or you wouldn't have sent it."

She did not answer, but stooped to lift the pot of coffee back from the blaze. The action recalled him to the immediate practical things, and he said:

"Think I can stay all night here?"

"I don't know of any reason to prevent it."

"Mowitza was used up, and I wanted a roof for her; but I didn't allow to come to the house myself."

"Where would you have slept?"

"In my blanket, on the hay."

"Just as if we would let you do that on our place!"

"No one would have known it if you had kept away from the stable, and in your bed, where you ought to be."

"Shall I go there at once, or pour your coffee first?"

"A cup of coffee would be a treat; I'm dead tired."

The coffee was drank, and the lunch for Andrews was appropriated for Genesee.

"Have you come back to the Kootenai country for good?" she asked, after furnishing him with whatever she could find in the pantry without awakening the rest.

"I don't know—it may be for bad," he replied doubtfully. "I've taken the trail north to sound any tribes that are hostile, and if troops are needed they are to follow me."

"Up into this country?"

"I reckon so. Are you afraid of fighting?"

She did not answer. A new idea, a sudden remembrance, had superseded that of Indian warfare.

"How long since you left Fort Owens?" she asked.

"Fifteen days. Why?"

"A friend of MacDougall's started in that direction about two weeks ago. Davy sent a kind message by him; but you must have passed it on the way."

"Likely; I've been in the Flathead country, and that's wide of the trail to Owens. Who was the man?"

"His name is Stuart."

He set the empty cup down, and looked in the fire for a moment with a steadiness that made the girl doubt if he had either heard or noticed; but after a little he spoke.

"What was that you said?"

"That the man's name was Stuart."

"Young or old?"

"Younger than you."

"And he has gone to Fort Owens?"

"Started for there, I said."

"Oh! then you haven't much faith in a tenderfoot getting through the hostiles or snow-banks?"

"How do you know he is a tenderfoot?"

He glanced up; she was looking at him with as much of a question in her eyes as her words.

"Well, I reckon I don't," he answered, picking up his hat as if to end the conversation. "I knew a man called Stuart once, but I don't know this one. Now, have you any pressing reason for loafing down here any longer? If not, I'll take my blanket and that lounge and get some sleep. I've been thirty-six hours in the saddle."

In vain she tried to prevail on him to go upstairs and go to bed "right."

"This is right enough for me," he answered, laying his hat and gloves on a table and unfastening his spurs. "No, I won't go up to the men's room. Good-night."

"But, Jack—look here—"

"I can't—too sleepy to look anywhere, or see if I did look;" and his revolvers and belt were laid beside the growing collection on the table.

"But Hen will scold me for not giving you better lodging."

"Then he and another man will have a shooting-match before breakfast to-morrow. Are you going?"

He was beginning to deliberately unfasten his neck-gear of scarlet and bronze. She hesitated, as if to make a final protest, but failed and fled; and as the door closed behind her, she heard another half-laughing "*Klahowya!*"

Early in the morning she was down-stairs, to find Aunty Luce half wild with terror at the presence of a stranger who had taken possession of the sitting-room during the night.

"Cain't see his face for the blanket, honey," she whispered shrilly, "but he's powerful big; an'—an' just peep through the door at the guns and things—it's wah times right ovah again, shueh as I'm tellen' yo', chile."

"Be quiet, Aunty, and get breakfast; it's a friend of ours."

"Hi-yi! I know all 'bout them kind o' friends, honey; same kind as comes South in wah times, a trampen' into houses o' quality folks an sleepen' whah they liked, an' callen' theyselves friends. He's a moven' now!—less call the folks!"

But the attempted yell was silenced by Rachel clapping her hand over the full lips and holding her tightly.

"Don't be a fool!" she admonished the old lady impatiently. "I let the man in last night; it's all right. Go and get him a good breakfast."

Aunty Luce eyed the girl as if she thought her a conspirator against the safety of the house, and despite precautions, managed to slip upstairs to Tillie with a much-garbled account of thieves of the night, and war-times, and tramps, and Miss Rache.

Much mystified, the little woman dressed quickly, and came down the stairs to find her husband shaking hands quite heartily with Genesee. Instantly she forgot the multitudinous reasons there were for banning him from the bosom of one's family, and found herself telling him he was very welcome.

"I reckon in your country a man would wait to hear someone say that before stowing his horse in their stables, or himself in their beds," he observed.

His manner was rather quiet, but one could see that the heartiness of their greeting was a great pleasure, and, it may be, a relief.

"Do you call that a bed?" asked Tillie, with contemptuous warmth. "I do think, Mr. Genesee, you might have wakened some of us, and given us a chance to treat a guest to something better."

"I suppose, then, I am not counted in with the family," observed Rachel, meekly, from the background. "I was on hand to do the honors, but wasn't allowed to do them. I even went to the stable to receive the late-comer, and was told to skip into the house, and given a general understanding that I interfered with him making himself comfortable in the hay-mow."

"Did she go out there at night, and alone, after we were all in bed?" And Tillie's tone indicated volumes of severity.

"Yes," answered Genesee; for Rachel, with a martyr-like manner, said nothing, and awaited her lecture; "she thought it was your man Andrews."

"Yes, and she would have gone just as quick if it had been Indians—or—or—anybody. She keeps me nervous half the time with her erratic ways."

"I rather think she's finding fault with me for giving you that coffee and letting you sleep on the lounge," said Rachel; and through Tillie's quick disclaimer her own shortcomings were forgotten, at least for the time. But the little matron's caution, that always lagged wofully behind her impulse, obtruded itself on her memory several times before the breakfast was over; and thinking of the reasons why a man of such character should not be received as a friend by ladies, especially girls, she was rather glad when she heard him say he was to push on into the hills soon as possible.

"I only stopped last night because I had to; Mowitza and I were both used up. I was trying to make MacDougall's, but when I crossed the trail to your place, I reckoned we would fasten to it—working through the snow was telling on her; but she is all right this morning."

Rachel told him of her visit to the old man, and his care of the cabin on the *Tamahnous* ground; of rumors picked up from the Kootenai tribe as to the chance of trouble with the Blackfeet, and many notes that were of interest to this hunter of feeling in the Indian question. He commented on her Chinook, of which she had gained considerable knowledge in the past year, and looked rather pleased when told it had been gained from Kalitan.

"You may see him again if I have to send for troops up here, and it looks that way now," he remarked, much to the terror and satisfaction of Aunty Luce, who was a house divided against itself in her terror of Indian trouble and her desire to prove herself a prophetess.

Jim was all anticipation. After a circus or a variety show, nothing had for him the charm that was exerted by the prospect of a fight; but his hopes in that direction were cooled by the scout's statement that the troops were not coming with the expectation of war, but simply to show the northern tribes its futility, and that the Government was strengthening its guard for protection all along the line.

"Then yer only ringin' in a bluff on the hostiles!" ventured the sanguinary hopeful disgustedly. "I counted on business if the 'yaller' turned out," meaning by the "yaller" the cavalry, upon whose accoutrements the yellow glints show.

"Never mind, sonny," said Genesee; "if we make a bluff, it won't be on an empty hand. But I must take the trail again, and make up for time lost in sleep here."

"When may we look for you back?"

It was Hardy who spoke, but something had taken the free-heartiness out of his tones; he looked just

a trifle uncomfortable. Evidently Tillie had been giving him a hint of second thoughts, and while trying to adopt them they fitted his nature too clumsily not to be apparent.

His guest, however, had self-possession enough for both.

"Don't look for me," he advised, taking in the group with a comprehensive glance; "that is, don't hurt the sight of your eyes in the business; the times are uncertain, and I reckon I'm more uncertain than the times. I'm obliged to you for the sleep last night, and the cover for Mowitza. If I can ever do you as good a turn, just sing out."

Hardy held out his hand impulsively. "You did a heap more for us a year ago, for which we never had a chance to make return," he said in his natural, hearty manner.

"Oh, yes, you have had," contradicted Rachel's cool tones from the porch; "you have the chance now."

Genesee darted one quick glance at her face. Something in it was evidently a compensation, and blotted out the bitterness that had crept into his last speech, for with a freer manner he took the proffered hand.

"That's all right," he said easily. "I was right glad of the trip myself, so it wasn't any work; but at the present speaking the days are not picnic days, and I must 'git.' Good-bye, Mrs. Hardy; good-bye, boys."

Then he turned in his saddle and looked at Rachel.

"*Klahowya —tillikum,*" he said, lifting his hat in a final farewell to all.

But in the glance toward her she felt he had said "thank you" as plainly as he had in the Indian language called her "friend."

"Oh, dear!" said Tillie, turning into the house as he rode away. "I wish the man had staid away, or else that we had known more about him when we first met him. It is very awkward to change one's manner to him, and—and yet it seems the only thing to do."

"Certainly," agreed Rachel, with an altogether unnecessary degree of contempt, "it is the only thing for you to do."

Tillie sat down miserably under this stroke, the emphasis denoting very plainly the temper of the speaker.

"Oh, don't be ugly, Rache," she begged. "I really feel wretched about it. I thought at first all the freedom of social laws out here was so nice; but it isn't. It has a terrible side to it, when the greatest scamp is of as much account as the finest gentleman, and expects to be received on the same footing. He—he had no right to come imposing on us at the first;" and with this addition to her defense, Tillie tried to ensconce herself behind the barricade of injured faith, but feeling that her protests were only weakening her argument.

"To the best of my recollection," said the girl, with a good deal of the supercilious in her manner, "he neither came near us nor advanced any desire for friendship on his own account. We hunted him up, and insisted on talking natural history and singing songs with him, or pressing on him many invitations to visit you, which he avoided giving any promise to. He was treated, not as an equal of the other gentlemen, but as a superior; and I believe it is the only time we ever did him justice."

"Yes, he did seem very nice those days; but you see it was all false pretense. Think of the life he

had come from, and that he went back to! It's no use talking, Rachel—there is only a right way and a wrong way in this world. He has shown what his choice was, and self-respecting people can only keep rid of him as much as possible. I don't like to hurt his feelings. It makes it very awkward for us that we have received any favors from him."

"The obligation rests rather lightly on your shoulders to cause you much fretting," said the girl bitterly; "and he thought so much of you, too—so much."

Her voice, that began so calmly, ended a little uncertainly, and she walked out of the door.

And Hardy, coming in a moment later, found Tillie divided between penitence and pettishness, and fighting her way to comfort through tears.

"I know I'm right, Hen, about the whole question," she whimpered, when safely perched on the stronghold of his knee, "and that is what makes it so aggravating."

"To know you're right?"

"No; but to have Rachel, who knows she is in the wrong, take that high-handed way about the affair, and end up by making me feel ashamed. Yes, she did, Hen—just that. I felt so ashamed I cried, and yet I knew I was right all the time—now what are you laughing at?"

CHAPTER VI.

NEIGHBORS OF THE NORTH PARK.

Reveille! Boots and saddles! Taps!

About the Hardy ranch the changes were rung on all those notes of camp, from early morn till dewy eve, by the melodious imitations of Jim.

Stories of grizzlies and black bear had grown *passe;* even the more rare accounts of wild horses spotted in some secluded valley failed to stir his old-time interest. All else had drifted into nothingness to him, for the "yaller" had come.

It had been stationed in the North Park for ten days—days of wild commotion at the ranch, for North Park was only two miles away, following the little branch of Missoula Creek that flowed north to the Kootenai River. And the errands necessary to and fro between the two points of residence were multitudinous, for Jim could never remember but one thing at a time of late; and the retraced steps he took would have tired out anyone less curious. He was disappointed, at first, to find that only one company had been sent up to guard the gate into the Kootenai country. It did not look as if they feared any outbreak or active service, and if it had not been in the most miserable of seasons, they would have had much the appearance of a pleasure party; but the rains were in the valleys and the snows on the hills, and camp life under those circumstances is a breeder of rayless monotony.

"And your ranch up here has proved the oasis in our desert," declared Fred Dreyer in a burst of gratitude to Rachel, just as if the locating of the sheep farm in that particular part of the world was due to the sagacity and far-sightedness of Miss Hardy; "and when Mr. Stuart told us at the Fort that we would have so charming a neighbor, I wanted to throw up my plate and give three cheers. We were at mess—at dinner, I mean. But I restrained my enthusiasm, because my leave to come along was only provisional at that time, and depended on my good behavior; but once here, my first impulse was to give you a big hug instead of the conventional hand-shake, for there are no girls at the Fort, and I was hungry for the sight of one."

It was not, as one may suppose, one of the uniformed warriors of the camp who expressed himself with this enthusiasm, though several looked as if they would like to, but it was the most petite little creature in petticoats—to her own disgust; and to mitigate the femininity of them as much as possible, they were of regular army blue, their only trimming belt and bands of the "yaller," an adornment Jim openly envied her, and considered as senseless when wasted on a girl. She was Miss Frederick Dreyer, the daughter of Major Dreyer, of the Fort, and the sweetheart of most of the men in it, from the veterans down.

"They all think they own me," she confided plaintively to Rachel, "just because I'm little. It's only a year and a half since they quit calling me 'Baby Fred'—think of that! When you're owned by a whole regiment, it's so hard to gather up any dignity, or keep it if you do get hold of it; don't you think so?"

"I have had no experience in that line," answered Rachel. "You see I have never been owned by a regiment, nor by anybody else."

"How delightfully independent you are!" and Miss Fred, encircled by comrades, seemed really to envy the other her loneness in the world. "No orderly forever on duty at your heels, and—"

"And no lieutenant," put in Rachel; and then they both laughed, and the younger told the elder she was ridiculous, for the lieutenants were not a bit worse than the rest.

"Worse? Not at all. I could even imagine circumstances under which they might be preferable, and I'm not gifted with much imagination, either."

"I know someone who thinks you are, and an enviable imagination at that," laughed Miss Fred.

Rachel opened her eyes a little in questioning, but did not speak.

"Why, it was Mr. Stuart. He talked about you a good deal at the Fort. You know there are several officers have their wives with them, and he was asking them lots of questions about typical Western girls, but they didn't seem to know any, for at a military fort girls don't remain girls long—unless they're half boys, like me. Someone always snaps them up and tacks 'Mrs.' to their name, and that settles them."

"Poor girls!"

"Oh, bless you! they would say that same thing of anyone who visited a fort and did not become married, or engaged—well, I should think so!"

"Do you come in for your share of commiseration?" asked Tillie, who was listening with interest to this gossip of military life that seemed strange for a woman to share.

"Me? Not a bit of it. I am not worth their notice in that respect. They haven't begun to treat me as if I was grown up, yet; that's the disadvantage of being little—you never can impress people with a belief in your own importance. Yesterday, Lieutenant Murray had the impudence to tell me that, when all was said and done, I was only a 'camp follower' hanging onto the coat-tails of the army, and likely to be mustered out of the regiment at the discretion of the superior officers—my lords and masters! What do you think of that?"

"That you must have made things rather warm for the poor Lieutenant to provoke a speech so unnatural to his usual courtesy," answered Rachel. "Whatever Mr. Stuart may credit me with, I have not imagination enough to conceive that speech being unprovoked."

"Well, if you're going to champion his High-Mightiness, I'll tell you nothing more. And Mr. Stuart said you were so sympathetic, too."

"I should say it was the Stuart who was imaginative," laughed Rachel; "ask Tillie."

"But he did say that—seriously," insisted Miss Fred, turning to Tillie. "When Mrs. Captain Sneath was curious about you, he said you had a delicate imagination that would find beauty in things that to many natures would be commonplace, and topped off a long list of virtues by saying you were the most loyal of friends."

Tillie sat looking at Rachel in astonishment.

"What have you been doing with the man?" she asked; "giving him some potion brewed by an Indian witch? A sure 'hoodoo' it must be, to warp a man's judgment like that! And you were not so very nice to him, either."

"Wasn't she?" asked Fred in amazement. "Well I think it would be hard to be anything else to so charming a man, and so clever a one. Do you know he is very rich?"

"No," answered Tillie. "We only knew that he was a physician out here for a change of air. He is splendid company."

"Well, I should think so! We were all in love with him at the Fort. Mrs. Sneath says he has given up medicine, and—I believe it's something of a secret, but it don't matter in this far-out corner of the world—he is something of a writer—a writer of fiction. The way I heard it was through the Captain, who used to know him at college. He says that the Stuart, as you call him, is most likely out here studying up material for some work—a novel, may be. Wouldn't you love to read it?"

"I can't say unless I have some idea of the class of work. What has he done?"

It was Rachel who was the questioner, and who, in the light of a reasonable cause for his presence in the Kootenai, felt herself all in a moment a bit of a fool for some of her old fancies.

"I don't know — wish I did," said Miss Fred promptly. "He writes under an assumed name. Mrs. Sneath wouldn't tell me, for fear I'd bother him about it, I suppose; but if he comes up here to camp, I'll find out before he leaves—see if I don't."

"He is not likely to pay a visit up here in this season of the year," remarked Rachel. "I thought he was going East from Owens."

"He did talk like that when he first went down there, and that's what made Captain Sneath decide he was studying up the country; for all at once he

said he might stay out West all winter, and seemed to take quite an interest in the Indian question—made friends with all the scouts down there, and talked probabilities with even the few 'good' Indians about the place. He told me he might see me again, if I was coming up with the company. So he is studying up something out here—sure."

Nobody answering this speculation, she was silent a bit, looking at Rachel, who had picked up a book off the table; and then she began to laugh.

"Well—" and Rachel glanced over at her, noting that she looked both amused and hesitating—"well, what is it?"

"I was only thinking how—how funny it would be if you happened to be that 'something.'"

But Rachel's answering laugh, as she pushed the book away, signified that it was the least probable of all fancies.

"It is you who should write romances, instead of the Stuart," she replied—"you and Tillie here. She has a good deal of the same material in her—that of a match-maker. She has spied out life-partners for me in all sorts of characters out here, from Davy MacDougall down to Jim. They are wonderfully anxious to get rid of me."

Just outside the gate, the blue of military garb showed the coming of usual afternoon callers from Camp Kootenai, among them the Major, commander of the company, the only occasional rebel being his petite non-commissioned officer in petticoats. A tall young fellow in lieutenant's uniform halted on his way out, to exchange greeting; and if the daughter complained of the young soldier's lack of deference, the father had no reason to, for in his eyes, as he

saluted, shone something nearer affection than mere duty—a feeling that he shared with every man in the command, for Major Dreyer was a universal favorite.

"No later news of that scout, Genesee?" asked the younger as they separated.

"No; but we can expect him soon now, for that red shadow of his, Kalitan, just loped into camp. And, by the way," added the older officer, "he mentioned that he passed our friend Stuart back at the settlement. He is coming up this way again."

"Tell Miss Fred that, Major. When I saw her, an hour ago, she needed something to put her in a good humor."

"Ah! Good-evening, Lieutenant."

"Good-evening, Major."

The minute the subordinate's back was turned, Miss Fred, with a running jump that would have done Jim credit, landed almost on the Major's shoulder. He gave her a ferocious hug, and dropped her plump on her feet with a stern—

"Attention!"

Quick as light the little hand was raised in salute, and the little figure gathered together its scattered dignity to make a soldierly appearance.

"Private Dreyer, I have been met on the outposts with a message telling me of a disorganized temper that should belong to your command. What have you to say for yourself?"

Instantly the role of the soldier was dropped, and that of the girl with a temper took its place.

"Oh, he told you, did he?" she asked, with a wrathful glance at the figure retreating toward camp. "Well, just wait until I go riding with him again!

He's called me a camp follower, and—and everything else that was uncivil."

"Ah! And what did you do?"

"I? Why nothing, of course."

"Nothing?"

"Well, I did threaten to go over and turn them out of the cabin that was built for me, but—

"But that was a mere trifle in this tropical climate. I've no doubt it would do them good to sleep under the stars instead of a roof; and then it would give you an opportunity to do some wholesale nursing, if they caught colds all around."

"Just as if I would!"

"Just as if you would not! And Lieutenant Murray would come in for the worst medicine and the biggest doses."

"If his constitution is equal to his impudence, it would take stupendous doses to have any effect. I wish he was sent back to the Fort."

"Won't sending him up among the Indians do just as well?"

"Y-yes. Are you going to, papa?"

"Ah! now you grow inquisitive."

"I do think," said Tillie, "you all plague her a great deal."

"They just treat me as if I was a joke instead of a girl," complained Fred. "They began it before I was born by giving me a boy's name, and it's been kept up ever since."

"Never mind, Baby," he said soothingly; "if I had not made a boy of you I could not have had you with me, so the cause was vital."

They both laughed, but it was easy to see that the cause was vital to them, and their companionship

very much of a necessity. Its interruptions since her babyhood had been few and short, and her education, picked up on the frontier, had taught her that in the world there was just one place for her—in the saddle, and beside her father, just as her mother had ridden beside him before Fred was born.

CHAPTER VII.

"A WOMAN WHO WAS LOST—LONG AGO!"

The next morning, bright and early, a call was made at the ranch by Kalitan; and Miss Fred, used as she was to the red men, grew rather enthusiastic over this haughty, graceful specimen, who gave her one glance at the door and walked past her into the house—as she afterward described it, "just as if she had been one of the wooden door-posts."

"Rashell Hardy?" was all he said; and without more ado Miss Fred betook herself up the stairs to do his implied bidding and hunt Miss Hardy.

"I rather think it's the grand mogul of all the Kootenais," she said, in announcing him. "No, he didn't give any card; but his personality is too striking to be mistaken, if one has ever seen him or heard him speak. He looked right over my head, and made me feel as if I was about two feet high."

"Young Indian?"

"Yes, but he looks like a young faun. That one never came from a scrub race."

"I'll ask him to stay to dinner," laughed Rachel; "if anything will cure one of a tendency to idealize an Indian, it is to see him satisfying the inner man. Come down and talk to him. It is Kalitan."

"Oh, it is Kalitan, is it? And pray what is that—a chief rich in lineage and blooded stock? His assurance speaks of wealth and power, I should say,

and his manner shows one a Fenimore Cooper spirit come to life. How am I as a guesser?"

"One of the worst in the world. Kalitan is really a handsome humbug in some ways. That superb manner of his is the only stock in trade he possesses beyond his swift feet; but the idea of importance he manages to convey speaks wonders for his strength of will. Come along!"

"*Klahowya*, Rashell Hardy?" he said; and stepping solemnly forward, shook her hand in a grave, ceremonious fashion. Rachel told him the other lady was her friend, by way of introduction, and he widened his mouth ever so little in a smile, but that was the only sign of acknowledgment he gave; and when Rachel spoke to him in English he would not answer, but sat stolidly looking in the fire until she saw what was wrong and addressed him in Chinook. "Rashell Hardy need not so soon forget," he reminded her briefly; and then went on with his speech to her of where he had been; the wonders he had done in the way of a runner, and all else of self-glorification that had occurred in the past months. Many times the name of his chief was uttered in a way that impressed on a listener the idea that among the troops along the frontier there were two men who were really worthy of praise—a scout and a runner. "Kalitan tired now —pretty much," he wound up, as a finale; "come up Kootenai country to rest, may be, while spring comes. Genesee he rest, too, may be—may be not."

"Where, Kalitan?"

"S'pose camp—s'pose may be Tamahnous cabin; not here yet."

"Coming back?"

Kalitan nodded, and arose.

"Come see you, may be, sometime, often," he said, as if conferring a special honor by promised visits; and then he stalked out as he had stalked in, only checking his gait at sight of Aunty Luce coming in from the kitchen with a dish of cold meat. She nearly dropped it in her fright, and closed her eyes in silent prayer and terror; and when she opened them the enemy had left the porch.

"Good Lawd, Miss Rache!" she gasped. "He's skeered me before bad enough, but this the fust time he evah stopped stock an' glare at me! I's gwine to complain to the milantary—I is, shuah."

"You are a great old goose!" said Rachel brusquely. "He wasn't looking at you, but at that cold meat."

There seemed a general gathering of the clans along the Kootenai valley that winter. With the coming north of Genesee had followed the troops, then Kalitan, then their mercurial friend of the autumn—the Stuart; and down from Scot's Mountain came Davy MacDougall, one fair day, to join the circle that was a sort of reunion. And among the troops were found many good fellows who were so glad of an evening spent at the ranch that never a night went by without a party gathered there.

"The heft o' them does everything but sleep here," complained Aunty Luce; "an' all the other ones look jealous 'cause Mr. Stuart does that."

For Hardy and his wife had insisted on his stopping with them, as before, though much of his time was put in at the camp. There was something about him that made him a companion much desired by men; Rachel had more opportunity to observe this now than when their circle was so much smaller. That gay good-humor, with its touches of serious feeling,

and the delicate sympathy that was always alive to earnest emotion—she found that those traits were keys to the hearts of men as well as women; and a smile here, a kind word there, or a clasp of the hand, were the only arts needed to insure him the unsought friendship of almost every man in the company.

"It's the gift that goes wi' the name," said MacDougall one day when someone spoke of the natural charm of the man's manner. "It's just that—no less. No, o' course he does na strive for it; it's but a bit o' nature. A blessin', say you, Miss? Well, mayhaps; but to the old stock it proved but a curse."

"It seems a rather fair life to connect the idea of a curse with," remarked the Major; "but I rather think he has seen trouble, too. Captain Sneath said something to that effect, I believe—some sudden death of wife and children in an epidemic down in Mexico."

"Married! That settles the romance," said Fred; "but he is interesting, anyway, and I am going immediately to find out what he has written and save up my money to buy copies."

"I may save you that expense in one instance," and Rachel handed her the book Stuart had sent her. Tillie looked at her in astonishment, and Fred seized it eagerly.

"Oh, but you are sly!" she said, with an accusing pout; "you've heard me puzzling about his work for days and never gave me a hint."

"I only guessed it was his, he never told me; but this morning I charged him with it, and he did not deny. I do not think there is any secret about it, only down at the Fort there were several ladies, I believe, and —and some of them curious—"

"You're right," laughed the Major; "they would

have hounded him to death. Camp life is monotonous to most women, and a novelist, especially a young, handsome fellow, would have been a bonanza to them. As it was, they tried to spoil him; and look here!" he said suddenly, "see that you say nothing of his marriage to him, Babe. As he does not mention it himself, it may be that the trouble, or—well, just remember not to broach the subject."

"Just as if I would!" said his daughter after he had left. "Papa never realizes that I have at all neared the age of discretion. But doesn't it seem strange to think of Mr. Stuart being married? He don't look a bit like it."

"Does that state of existence impress itself so indelibly on one's physical self?" laughed Rachel.

"It does—mostly," affirmed Fred. "They get settled down and prosy, or else—well, dissipated."

"Good gracious! Is that the effect we are supposed to have on the character of our lords and masters?" asked Mrs. Hardy unbelievingly.

"Fred's experience is confined to barrack life and its attendant evils. I don't think she makes allowance for the semi-artistic temper of the Stuart. He strikes me as having just enough of it to keep his heart always young, and his affections too—on tap, as it were."

"What queer ideas you have about that man!" said Fred suddenly. "Don't you like him?"

"I would not dare say no with so many opposing me."

"Oh, you don't know Rachel. She is always attributing the highest of virtues or the worst of vices to the most unexpected people," said Tillie. "I don't believe she has any feeling in the question at all, except to get on the opposite side of the question

from everyone else. If she would own up, I'll wager she likes him as well as the rest of us."

"Do you, Rachel?" But her only answer was a laugh. 'If you do, I can't see why you disparage him."

"I did not."

"Well, you said his affections were always on tap."

"That was because I envy him the exhaustless youth such a temperament gives one. Such people defy time and circumstances in a way we prosaic folks can never do. It is a gift given to an artist, to supply the lack of practical ingredients that are the prime ones to the rest of creation."

"How you talk! Why, Mr. Stuart is not an artist!"

"Isn't he? There are people who are artists though they never draw a line or mix a color; but don't you think we are devoting a great deal of time to this pill-peddler of literary leanings?"

"You are prejudiced," decided Fred. "Leanings indeed! He has done more than lean in that direction—witness that book."

"I like to hear him tell a story, if he is in the humor," remarked Tillie, with a memory of the cozy autumn evenings. "We used to enjoy that so much before we ever guessed he was a story-teller by profession."

"Well, you must have had a nice sort of a time up here," concluded Fred; "a sort of Tom Moore episode. He would do all right for the poet-prince—or was it a king? But you—well, Rachel, you are not just one's idea of a Lalla."

"You slangy little mortal! Go and read your book."

Which she did obediently and thoroughly, to the author's discomfiture, as he was besieged with ques-

tions that taxed his memory and ingenuity pretty thoroughly at times.

But he found himself on a much better footing with Rachel than during his first visit. It may have been that her old fancy regarding his mission up there was disappearing; the fancy itself had always been a rather intangible affair—a fabrication wrought by the shuttle of a woman's instinct. Or, having warned Genesee —she had felt it was a warning—there might have fallen from her own shoulders some of the responsibility she had so gratuitously assumed. Whatever it was, she was meeting him on freer ground, and found the association one of pleasure.

"I think Miss Fred or your enlarged social circle has had a most excellent influence on your temper," he said to her one day after a ride from camp together, and a long, pleasant chat. "You are now more like the girl I used to think you might be—the girl you debarred me from knowing."

"But think what amount of time you had for work in those days that are forfeited now to dancing attendance on we women folk!"

"I do not dance."

"Well, you ride, and you walk, and you sing, and tell stories, and manage at least to waste lots of time when you should be working."

"You have a great deal of impatience with anyone who is not a worker, haven't you?"

"Yes," she said, looking up at him. "I grow very impatient myself often from the same cause."

"You always seem to me to be very busy," he answered half-vexedly; "too busy. You take on yourself responsibilities in all directions that do not belong to you; and you have such a way of doing as you

please that no one about the place seems to realize how much of a general manager you are here, or how likely you are to overburden yourself."

"Nonsense!"

She spoke brusquely; but could not but feel the kindness in the penetration that had given her appreciation where the others, through habit, had grown to take her accomplishments as a matter of course. In the beginning they had taken them as a joke.

"Pardon me," he said finally. "I do not mean to be rude, but do you mind telling me if work is a necessity to you?"

"Certainly not. I have none of that sort of pride to contend with, I hope, and I have a little money—not much, but enough to live on; so, you see, I am provided for in a way."

"Then why do you always seem to be skirmishing around for work?" he asked, in a sort of impatience. "Women should be home-makers, not—"

"Not prospectors or adventurers," she finished up amiably. "But as I have excellent health, average strength and understanding, I feel they should be put to use in some direction. I have not found the direction yet, and am a prospector meanwhile; but a contented, empty life is a contemptible thing to me. I think there is some work intended for us all in the world; and," she added, with one of those quick changes that kept folks from taking Rachel's most serious meanings seriously—"and I think it's playing it pretty low down on Providence to bluff him on an empty hand."

He laughed. "Do you expect, then, to live your life out here helping to manage other people's ranches and accumulating that sort of Western logic in extenuation?"

She did not answer for a little; then she said:

"I might do worse."

She said it so deliberately that he could not but feel some special thing was meant, and asked quickly:

"What?"

"Well, I might be given talents of benefit to people, and fritter them away for the people's pastime. The people would never know they had lost anything, or come so near a great gain; but I, the cheat, would know it. After the lights were turned out and the curtain down on the farce, I would realize that it was too late to begin anew, but that the same lights and the same theatre would have served as well for the truths of Christ as the pranks of Pantaloon—the choice lay only in the will of the worker."

Her eyes were turned away from him, as if she was seeking for metaphors in the white stretch of the snow-fall. He reached over and laid his hand on hers.

"Rachel!"

It was the only time he had called her that, and the caress of the name gave voice to the touch of his fingers.

"Rachel! What is it you are talking about? Look around here! I want to see you! Do you mean that you think of—of me like that—tell me?"

If Miss Fred could have seen them at that moment it would have done her heart good, for they really looked rather lover-like; each was unconscious of it, though their faces did not lack feeling. She drew her hand slowly away, and said, in that halting yet persistent way in which she spoke when very earnest yet not very sure of herself:

"You think me egotistical, I suppose, to criticise

work that is beyond my own capabilities, but—it was you I meant."

"Well?"

His fingers closed over the arm of the chair instead of her hand. All his face was alight with feeling. Perhaps it was as well that her stubbornness kept her eyes from his; to most women they would not have been an aid to cool judgment.

"Well, there isn't anything more to say, is there?" she asked, smiling a little out at the snow. "It was the book that did it—made me feel like that about you; that your work is—well, surface work—skimmed over for pastime. But here and there are touches that show how much deeper and stronger the work you might produce if you were not either lazy or careless."

"You give one heroic treatment, and can be merciless. The story was written some time ago, and written under circumstances that—well, you see I do not sign my name to it, so I can't be very proud of it."

"Ah! that is it? Your judgment, I believe, is too good to be satisfied with it; I wouldn't waste breath speaking, if I was not sure of that. But you have the right to do work you can be proud of; and that is what you must do."

Rachel's way was such a decided way, that people generally accepted her "musts" as a matter of course. Stuart did the same, though evidently unused to the term; and her cool practicalities that were so surely noting his work, not himself, had the effect of checking that first impulse of his to touch her—to make her look at him. He felt more than ever that the girl was strange and changeable—not only in herself, but in her influence. He arose and walked across the

floor a couple of times, but came back and stood beside her.

"You think I am not ambitious enough; and you are right, I suppose. I have never yet made up my mind whether it was worth my while to write, or whether it might not be more wise to spare the public."

"But you have the desire—you must feel confidence at times."

"How do you know or imagine so much of what I feel?"

"I read it in that book," and she nodded toward the table. "In it you seem so often just on the point of saying or doing, through the people, things that would lift that piece of work into a strong moral lesson; but just when you reach that point you drop it undeveloped."

"You have read and measured it, haven't you?" and he sat down again beside her. "I never thought of—of what you mention in it. A high moral lesson," he repeated; "but to preach those a man should feel himself fit; I am not."

"I don't believe you!"

"What do you know about it?" he demanded so sharply that she smiled; it was so unlike him. But the sharpness was evidently not irritation, for his face had in it more of sadness than any other feeling; she saw it, and did not speak.

After a little he turned to her with that rare impetuosity that was so expressive.

"You are very helpful to me in what you have said; I think you are that to everyone—it seems so. Perhaps you are without work of your own in the world, that you may have thought for others who need help; that is the highest of duties, and it needs

strong, good hearts. But do you understand that it is as hard sometimes to be thought too highly of as to be accused wrongfully? It makes one feel such a cheat—such a cursed liar!"

"I rather think we are all cheats, more or less, in that respect," she answered. "I am quite sure the inner workings of my most sacred thought could not be advertised without causing my exile from the bosom of my family; yet I refuse to think myself more wicked than the rest of humanity."

"Don't jest!"

"I am really not jesting," she answered. "And I believe you are over-sensitive as to your own shortcomings, whatever they happen to be. Because I have faith in your ability to do strong work, don't think I am going to skirmish around for a pedestal, or think I've found a piece of perfection in human nature, because they're not to be found, my friend."

"How old are you?" he asked her suddenly.

She laughed, feeling so clearly the tenor of his thought.

"Twenty-two by my birthdays, but old enough to know that the strongest workers in the world have not been always most immaculate. What difference the sort of person one has been, or the life they have lived, if they come out of it with knowledge and the wish to use it well? You have a certain power that is yours, to use for good or bad, and from a fancy that you should not teach or preach, you let it go to waste. Don't magnify peccadillos!"

"You seem to take for granted the fact that all my acts have been trifling—that only the promises are worthy," he said impatiently.

"I do believe," she answered, smiling brightly, "that

you would rather I thought you an altogether wicked person than an average trifler. But I will not—I do not believe it possible for you deliberately to do any wicked thing; you have too tender a heart, and—"

"You don't know anything about it!" he repeated vehemently. "What difference whether an act is deliberate or careless, so long as the effect is evil? I tell you the great part of the suffering in the world is caused not by wicked intents and hard hearts, but by the careless desire to shirk unpleasant facts, and the soft-heartedness that will assuage momentary pain at the price of making a life-long cripple, either mentally, morally, or physically. Nine times out of ten the man whom we call soft-hearted is only a moral coward. Ah, don't help me to think of that; I think of it enough—enough!"

He brought his clenched hand down on the arm of the chair with an emphasis that was heightened by the knitted brow and compressed lips. He did not look at her. The latter part of the rapid speech seemed more to himself than to her. It at least admitted of no answer; the manner as much as the words kept her silent.

"Come! come!" he added, after a little, as if to arouse himself as well as her. "You began by giving me some good words of advice and suggestion; I must not repay you by dropping into the blues. For a long time I've been a piece of drift-wood, with nothing to anchor ambition to; but a change is coming, I think, and—and if it brings me fair weather, I may have something then to work for; then I may be worth your belief in me—I am not now. My intentions to be so are all right, but they are not always to be trusted. I said, before, that you had the faculty of making

people speak the truth to you, if they spoke at all, and I rather think I am proving my words."

He arose and stood looking down at her. Since he had found so many words, she had seemed to lose hers; anyway, she was silent.

"It can't be very pleasant for you," he said at last, "to be bored by the affairs of every renegade whom you are kind to, because of some fancied good you may see in him; but you are turning out just the sort of woman I used to fancy you might be—and—I am grateful to you."

"That's all right," she answered in the old brusque way. To tell the truth, a part of his speech was scarcely heard. Something in the whole affair—the confidence and personal interest, and all—had taken her memory back to the days of that *cultns corrie*, when another man had shared with her scenes somewhat similar to this. Was there a sort of fate that had set her apart for this sort of thing? She smiled a little grimly at the fancy, and scarcely heard him. He saw the ghost of the smile, and it made him check himself in something he was about to say, and walk toward the door.

She neither spoke nor moved; her face was still toward the window. And turning to look at her, his indecision disappeared, and in three steps he was beside her.

"Rachel, I want to speak to you of something else," he said rapidly, almost eagerly, as if anxious to have it said and done with; "I—I want to tell you what that anchor is I've been looking for, and without which I never will be able to do the higher class of work, and—and—"

"Yes?"

He had stopped, making a rather awkward pause

after his eager beginning. And, with the one encouraging word, she looked up at him and waited.

"It is a woman."

"Not an unusual anchor for mankind," she remarked with a little laugh.

But there was no answering smile in his eyes; they were very serious.

"I never will be much good to myself, or the rest of the world, until I find her again," he said, "though no one's words are likely to help me more than yours. You would make one ambitious if he dared be, and—"

"Never mind about that," she said kindly. "I am glad if it has happened so. And this girl—it is someone you—love?"

"I can't talk to anyone of her—yet," he answered, avoiding her eyes; "only I wanted you to understand—it is at least a little step toward that level where you fancy I may belong. Don't speak of it again; I can hardly say what impelled me to tell you now. Yes, it is a woman I cared for, and who was—lost—whom I lost—long ago."

And a moment later she was alone, and could hear his step in the outer room, then on the porch. Fred called after him, but he made no halt—did not even answer, much to the surprise of that young lady and Miss Margaret.

And the other girl sat watching him until he disappeared in the stables, and a little later saw him emerge and ride at no slow gait out over the trail toward camp.

"It only needed that finale," she soliloquized, "to complete the picture. Woman! woman! What a disturbing element you are in the universe—man's universe!"

After this bit of trite philosophy, the smile devel-

oped into a noiseless laugh that had something of irony in it.

"I rather think Talapa's entrance was more dramatic," was one of the reflections that kept her company; "anyway, she was more picturesque, if less elegant, than Mrs. Stuart is likely to be. Mrs. Stuart! By the way, I wonder if it is Mrs. Stuart? Yes, I suppose so—yet, 'a woman whom I cared for, and who was lost—long ago!'—Lost? lost?"

CHAPTER VIII.

"I'LL KILL HIM THIS TIME!"

Rumors were beginning to drift into camp of hostile intents of the Blackfeet; and a general feeling of uneasiness became apparent as no word came from the chief of their scouts, who had not shown up since locating the troops.

The Major's interest was decidedly alive in regard to him, since not a messenger entered camp from any direction who was not questioned on the subject. But from none of them came any word of Genesee.

Other scouts were there—good men, too, and in the southern country of much value; but the Kootenai corner of the State was almost an unknown region to them. They were all right to work under orders; but in those hills, where everything was in favor of the native, a man was needed who knew every gully and every point of vantage, as well as the probable hostile.

And while Major Dreyer fretted and fumed over the absentee, there was more than one of the men in camp to remember that their chief scout was said to be a squaw man; and as most of them shared his own expressed idea of that class, conjectures were set afloat as to the probability of his not coming back at all, or if it came to a question of fight with the northern Indians, whether he might not be found on the other side.

"You can't bet any money on a squaw man," was

the decision of one of the scouts from over in Idaho—one who did not happen to be a squaw man himself, because the wife of his nearest neighbor at home objected. "No, gentlemen, they're a risky lot. This one is a good man; I allow that—a d—d good man, I may say, and a fighter from away back; but the thing we got to consider is that up this way he's with his own people, as you may say, having taken a squaw wife and been adopted into the tribe; an' I tell you, sirs, it's jest as reasonable that he will go with them as again them—I'm a tellin' you!"

Little of these rumors were heard at the ranch. It was an understood thing among the men that the young ladies at Hardy's were to hear nothing of camp affairs that was likely to beget alarm; but Stuart heard them, as did the rest of the men; and like them, he tried to question the only one in camp who shared suspicion—Kalitan. But Kalitan was unapproachable in English, and even in Chinook would condescend no information. He doubtless had none to give, but the impression of suppressed knowledge that he managed to convey made him an object of close attention, and any attempt to leave camp would have been hailed as proof positive of many intangible suspicions. But he made no such attempt. On the contrary, after his arrival there from the Gros Ventres, he seemed blissfully content to live all winter on Government rations and do nothing. But he was not blind by any means, and understanding English, though he would not speak it, the chances were that he knew more of the thought of the camp than it guessed of his; and his stubborn resentment showed itself when three Kootenai braves slouched into camp one day, and Kalitan was not allowed to speak to them save in the presence of an interpreter, and when

one offered in the person of a white scout, Kalitan looked at him with unutterable disdain, and turning his back, said not a word.

The Major was not at camp. He had just left to pay his daily visit to Hardy's; for, despite all persuasions, he refused to live anywhere but with his men, and if Fred did not come to see him in the morning, he was in duty bound to ride over to her quarters in the afternoon.

The officer in command during his absence was a Captain Holt, a man who had no use for an Indian in any capacity, and whose only idea of settling the vexed question of their rights was total extermination and grave-room—an opinion that is expressed by many a white man who has had to deal with them. But he was divided between his impulse to send the trio on a double-quick about their business and the doubt as to what effect it would have on the tribe if they were sent back to it in the sulks. Ordinarily he would not have given their state of mind a moment's consideration; but the situation was not exactly ordinary, and he hesitated.

After stowing away enough provender in their stomachs to last an ordinary individual two days, and stowing the remainder in convenient receptacles about their draperies, intercourse was resumed with their white hosts by the suggestive Kalitan.

Just then Stuart and Rachel rode into camp. They had taken to riding together into camp, and out of camp, and in a good many directions of late; and in the coffee-colored trio she at once recognized the brave of the bear-claws whom she had spoken with during that "*olallie*" season in the western hills, and whom she had learned since was a great friend of Genesee's.

She spoke to him at once—a great deal more intelligibly than her first attempt—and upon questioning, learned that she was well remembered. She heard herself called "the squaw who rides" by him, probably from the fact that she was the only white woman met by their hunters in the hills, though she had not imagined herself so well known by them as his words implied.

He of the bear-claws—their spokesman—mentioned Kalitan, giving her for the first time an idea of what had occurred. She turned at once to Captain Holt—not protesting, but interested—and learned all she wanted to.

"Kalitan does not like your southern scouts, for some reason," she said, "and I rather think it was his dignity rather than his loyalty that would suffer from having one of them a listener. Let them speak in my presence; I can understand them, and not arouse Kalitan's pride, either."

And the Captain, nothing loath, accepted her guidance out of the dilemma, though it was only by a good deal of flattery on her part that Kalitan could at all forget his anger enough to speak to anyone.

And the conversation was, after all, commonplace enough, as it was mostly a recital of his—Kalitan's—glories; for in the eyes of these provincials he posed as a warrior of travel and accumulated knowledge. The impassive faces of his listeners gave no sign as to whether they took him at his own valuation or not. Rachel now and then added a word, to keep from having too entirely the appearance of a listener, and she asked of Genesee.

The answer gave her to understand that weeks ago —five weeks—Genesee had been in their village; asked

for a runner to go south to the Fort with talking-paper. Had bought pack-horse and provisions, and started alone to the northeast—may be Blackfoot Agency, they could not say; had seen him no more. Kalitan made some rapid estimate of probabilities that found voice in—

"Blackfoot — one hundred and twenty miles; go slow—Mowitza tired; long *wau-wau* (talk); come slow—snows high; come soon now, may be."

And that was really the only bit of information in the entire "*wau-wau*" that was of interest to the camp —information that Kalitan would have disdained to satisfy them with willingly; and even to Rachel, whom he knew was Genesee's friend, and his, he did not hint the distrust that had grown among the troops through that suspicious absence.

He would talk long and boastfully of his own affairs, but it was a habit that contrasted strangely with the stubborn silence by which he guarded the affairs of others.

"What is the matter back there?" asked Rachel, as she and Stuart started back to the ranch. "Ill-feeling?"

"Oh, I guess not much," he answered; "only they are growing careful of the Indians of late—afraid of them imposing on good nature, I suppose."

"A little good nature in Captain Holt would do him no harm with the Indians," she rejoined; "and he should know better than to treat Kalitan in that suspicious way. Major Dreyer would not do it, I feel sure, and Genesee won't like it."

"Will that matter much to the company or the command?"

He only spoke so to arouse that combative spirit

of hers; but she did not retort as usual—only said quietly:

"Yes, I think it would—they will find no man like him."

They never again referred to that conversation that had been in a way a confession on his part—the question of the woman at least was never renewed, though he told her much of vague plans that he hoped to develop, "when the time comes."

Three days after the visit of Bear-claws and his brethren, those two were again at the camp; this time as an addition to Miss Fred, who thought it was a good-enough day to go and see the "boys."

And it surely was a good-enough day for any use—clear and fresh overhead, white and sparkling underfoot, and just cold enough to make them think with desire of the cheery wood fires in the camp they were making for. From above, a certain exhilaration was borne to them on the air, sifted through the cedars of the guardian hills; even the horses seemed enthused with the spirit of it, and joyously entered into a sort of a go-as-you-please race that brought them all laughing and breathless down the length of "the avenue," a strip of beaten path about twenty feet wide, along which the tents were pitched in two rows facing each other—and not very imposing looking rows, either.

There were greetings and calls right and left, as they went helter-skelter down the line; but there was no check of speed until they stopped, short, at the Major's domicile, that was only a little more grand on the outside than the rest, by having the colors whipping themselves into shreds from the flag-staff at the door.

It was too cold for ceremony; and throwing the bri-

dles to an orderly, they made a dash for the door—Miss Fred leading.

"Engaged is he?" she said good-humoredly to the man who stepped in her path. "I don't care if he is married. I don't intend to freeze on the place where his door-step ought to be. You tell him so."

The man on duty touched his cap and disappeared, and from the sound of the Major's laughter within, must have repeated the message verbatim, and a moment later returned.

"Major Dreyer says you may enter;" and then, laughing and shivering, the Major's daughter seized Rachel with one hand, Stuart with the other, and making a quick charge, darted into the ruling presence.

"Oh, you bear!" she said, breaking from her comrades and into the bear's embrace; "to keep us out there—and it so cold! And I came over specially for—"

And then she stopped. The glitter of the sun on the snow had made a glimmer of everything under a roof, and on her entrance she had not noticed a figure opposite her father, until a man rose to his feet and took a step forward as if to go.

"Let me know when you want me, Major," he said; and the voice startled those two muffled figures in the background, for both, by a common impulse, started forward—Rachel throwing back the hood of her jacket and holding out her hand.

"I am glad you have come," she said heartily, and he gripped the offered member with a sort of fierceness as he replied:

"Thank you, Miss."

But his eyes were not on her. The man who had come with her—who still held her gloves in his

hand—was the person who seemed to draw all his attention.

"You two are old neighbors, are you not?" remarked the Major. "Fred, my dear, you have met Mr. Genesee, our scout? No? Mr. Genesee, this is my daughter; and this, a friend of ours—Mr. Stuart."

An ugly devil seemed alive in Genesee's eyes, as the younger man came closer, and with an intense, expressive gesture, put out his hand.

And then, with a bow that might be an acknowledgment of the introduction, and might be only one of adieu to the rest of the group, the scout walked to the door without a word, and Stuart's hand dropped to his side.

"Come back in an hour, Genesee," said the Major; "I will think over the trip to the Fort in the meantime."

"I hear. Good-morning, ladies;" and then the door closed behind him, and the quartette could not but feel the situation awkward.

"Come closer to the fire—sit down," said the Major hospitably, intent on effacing the rudeness of his scout. "Take off your coat, Stuart; you'll appreciate it more when outside. And I'm going to tell you right now, that, pleased as I am to have you all come this morning, I intend to turn you out in twenty minutes —that's all the time I can give to pleasure this morning."

"Well, you are very uncivil, I must say," remarked Fred. "But we will find some of the other boys not so unapproachable. I guess," she added, "that we have to thank Mr. Man-with-the-voice for being sent to the right-about in such short order."

"You did not hear him use it much," rejoined her

father, and then turned to the others, neither of whom had spoken. "He is quite a character, and of great value to us in the Indian troubles, but I believe is averse to meeting strangers; anyway, the men down at the Fort did not take to him much—not enough to make him a social success."

"I don't think he would care," said Fred. "He impressed me very much as Kalitan did when I first met him. Does living in the woods make people feel like monarchs of all they survey? Does your neighbor ever have any better manners, Rachel?"

"I have seen him with better—and with worse."

"Worse? What possibilities there must be in that man! What do you think, Mr. Stuart?"

"Perhaps he lacks none of the metal of a soldier because he does not happen to possess that of a courtier," hazarded Stuart, showing no sign that the scout's rudeness had aroused the slightest feeling of resentment; and Rachel scored an opinion in his favor for that generosity, for she, more than either of the others, had noted the meeting, and Genesee's entire disregard of the Stuart's feelings.

Major Dreyer quickly seconded Stuart's statement.

"You are right, sir. He may be as sulky as Satan—and I hear he is at times—but his work makes amends for it when he gets where work is needed. He got in here last night, dead-beat, from a trip that I don't believe any other man but an Indian could have made and get back alive. He has his good points—and they happen to be points that are in decided demand up here."

"I don't care about his good points, if we have to be turned out for him," said Fred. "Send him word he can sleep the rest of the day, if he is tired out; may be he would wake up more agreeable."

"And you would not be ousted from my attention," added her father, pinching her ear. "Are you jealous of Squaw-man-with-a-voice?"

"Is he that?" asked the girl, with a great deal of contempt in her tone. "Well, that is enough to hear of him. I should think he would avoid white people. The specimens we have seen of that class would make you ashamed you were human," she said, turning to Rachel and Stuart. "I know papa says there are exceptions, but papa is imaginative. This one looks rather prosperous, and several degrees cleaner than I've seen them, but—"

"Don't say anything against him until you know you have reason, Fred," suggested Rachel. "He did me a favor once, and I can't allow people to talk about him on hearsay. I think he is worse than few and better than many, and I have known him over a year."

"Mum is the word," said Fred promptly, proceeding to gag herself with two little fists; but the experiment was a failure.

"If she takes him under her wing, papa, his social success is an assured fact, even if he refuses to open his mouth. May I expect to be presented to his interesting family to-morrow, Rachel?"

But Rachel only laughed, and asked the Major some questions of reports from the northeast; of the attitude of the Blackfeet, and the snow-fall in the mountains.

"The Blackfeet are all right now," he replied, "and the snows in the hills to the east are very heavy—that it was that caused our scout's delay. But south of us I hear they are not nearly so bad, for a wonder, and am glad to hear it, as I myself may need to make a trip down to Fort Owens."

"Why, papa," broke in his commanding officer, "you are not going to turn scout or runner, are you, and leave me behind? I won't stay!"

"You will obey orders, as a soldier should," answered her father. "But if I go instead of sending, it will be because it is necessary, and you would have to bow to necessity, and wait until I could get back."

"And we've got to thank Mr. Squaw-man for that, too!" burst out Fred wrathfully. "You never thought of going until he came; oh, I know it—I hate him!"

"He would be heart-broken if he knew it," observed her father dryly. "By the way, Miss Rachel, do you know if there is room in the ranch stables for another horse?"

"They can make room, if it is necessary. Why?"

"Genesee's mare is used up even worse than her master by this long, hard journey he has made. Our stock that is in good condition can stand our accommodations all right, but that fellow seemed miserable to think the poor beast had not quarters equal to his own. He is such a queer fellow about asking a favor that I thought—"

"And the thought does you credit," said the girl with a suspicious moisture in her eyes. "Poor, brave Mowitza! I could not sleep very soundly myself if I knew she was not cared for, and I know just how he feels. Don't say anything about it to him, but I will have my cousin come over and get her, before evening."

"You are a trump, Miss Rachel!" said the Major emphatically; "and if you can arrange it, I know you will lift a load off Genesee's mind. I'll wager he is out there in the shed with her at this moment, instead of beside a comfortable fire; and this camp owes him

too much, if it only knew it, to keep from him any comforts for either himself or that plucky bit of horse-flesh."

And then the trio, under guard of the Lieutenant, paid some other calls along the avenue—were offered more dinners, if they would remain, than they could have eaten in a week; but in all their visits they saw nothing more of the scout. Rachel spoke of his return to one of the men, and received the answer that they reckoned he was putting in most of his time out in the shed tying the blankets off his bunk around that mare of his.

"Poor Mowitza! she was so beautiful," said the girl, with a memory of the silken coat and wise eyes. "I would not like to see her looking badly."

"Do you know," said Stuart to her, "that when I heard you speak of Mowitza and her beauty and bravery, I never imagined you meant a four-footed animal?"

"What, then?"

"Well, I am afraid it was a nymph of the dusky tribe—a woman."

"Naturally!" was the one ironical and impatient word he received as answer, and scarcely noted.

He was talking with the others on multitudinous subjects, laughing, and interested in jests that he scarcely heard, and the hand he had offered to Genesee clenching and opening nervously in his seal glove.

Rachel watched him closely. She had no reason, but her instincts anticipated something unusual from that meeting; but the reality had altered the positions of the men from all her preconceived fancies. More strong than ever was her conviction that those two were not strangers; but from Stuart's face or

manner she could learn nothing. He was a much better actor than Genesee.

But if they did not see any more of him, he at least saw them; for from the shed, off several rods from the avenue, the trail to Hardy's ranch was in plain sight half its length. And the party, augmented by Lieutenant Murray, galloped past in all ignorance of moody eyes watching them from the side of a blanketed horse.

Out a half-mile, two of the riders halted a moment, while the others dashed on. The horses of those two moved close—close together. The arms of the man reached over to the woman, who leaned toward him. At that distance it looked like an embrace, though he was really but tying a loose scarf, and then they moved apart and went on over the snow, after their comrades. And a brutal oath burst from the lips of the man she had said was worse than few.

"If it is—I'll kill him this time! By God!—I'll kill him!"

CHAPTER IX.

AFTER TEN YEARS.

Major Dreyer left the next day, with a scout and small detachment, with the idea of making the journey to Fort Owens and back in two weeks, as matters were to be discussed requiring prompt action and personal influence.

Jack Genesee was left behind—an independent, unenlisted adjunct to the camp, and holding a more anomalous position there than Major Dreyer dreamed of; for none of the suspicions current of the scout ever penetrated to his tent—the only one in the company who was ignorant of them.

"Captain Holt commands, Genesee," he had said before taking leave; "but on you I depend chiefly in negotiations with the reds, should there be any before I get back, for I believe you would rather save lives on both sides than win a victory through extermination of the hostiles. We need more men with those opinions; so, remember, I trust you."

The words had been uttered in the presence of others, and strengthened the suspicions of the camp that Genesee had been playing some crooked game. None knew the reason for that hastily decided trip of the Major's, though they all agreed that that "d—d skunk of a squaw man" was posted. Prophecies were rife to the effect that more than likely he was playing into the hands of the hostiles by sending away the Major and as many men as possible on some wild-goose

chase; and the decision arrived at was that observation of his movements was a matter of policy, and readiness to meet an attack from the hills a probable necessity.

He saw it—had seen it from the day of his arrival—and he kept pretty much out of the way of all except Kalitan; for in watching Genesee they found they would have to include his runner, who was never willingly far away.

But for the first few days their watching was an easy matter, for the suspected individual appeared well content to hug the camp, only making daily visits to Hardy's stable, generally in the evening; but to enter the house was something he kept clear of.

"No," he said, in answer to Hardy's invitation; "I reckon I'm more at home with the horses than with your new company. I'll drop in sometime after the Kootenai valley is clear of uniforms."

"My wife told me to ask you," said Hardy; "and when you feel like coming, you'll find the door open."

"Thank you, Hardy; but I reckon not—not for awhile yet."

"I'd like you to get acquainted with Stuart," added the unsuspicious ranchman. "He is a splendid fellow, and has a lot of interest in this part of the country."

"Oh, he has!"

"Yes," and Hardy settled himself, Mexican fashion, to a seat on his heels. "You see he's a writer, a novelist, and I guess he's going to write up this territory some. Anyway, this is the second trip he has come up here on. You could give him more points than any man I know."

"Yes—I might."

"Rachel has given him all the knowledge she has about the country—the Indians, and all that—but she owns that all she learned she got from you; so, if you had a mind to be more sociable, Genesee—"

The other arose to his feet.

"Obliged to you, Hardy," he said; and only the addition of the name saved it from curtness. "Some day, perhaps, when things are slack; I have no time now."

"Well, he doesn't seem to me to be rushed to death with work," soliloquized Hardy, who was abruptly left alone. "He used to seem like such an all-round good fellow, but he's getting surlier than the devil. May be Tillie was right to hope he wouldn't accept the invitation. Hello, Stuart! Where are you bound for?"

"Nowhere in particular. I thought that Indian, Kalitan, was over here."

"No; Jack Genesee came over himself this morning. That mare of his is coming up in great shape, and you'd better believe he's proud over it. I reckon he saw you coming that he took himself away in such a hurry. He's a queer one."

"I should judge so. Then Kalitan won't be over?"

"Well, he's likely to be before night. Want him?"

"Yes. If you see him, will you send him to the house?"

Hardy promised; and Kalitan presented himself, with the usual interrogation:

"Rashell Hardy?"

But she, the head of the house in his eyes, was in the dark about his visit, and was not enlightened much when Stuart entered, stating that it was he who had wanted Kalitan.

But that personage was at once deaf and dumb.

Only by Rachel saying, "It is my friend; will you not listen?" did he unbend at all; and the girl left them on the porch alone, and a little later Stuart went upstairs, where she heard him walking up and down the room. She had heard a good deal of that since that day the three had called upon the Major, and a change had come over the spirit of their social world; for where Stuart had been the gayest, they could never depend on him now. Even Rachel found their old pleasant companionship ended suddenly, and she felt, despite his silence, he was unhappy.

"Well, when he finds his tongue he will tell me what's the matter," she decided, and so dismissed that question.

And she rode to camp alone if it was needful, and sometimes caught a glimpse of Genesee if he did not happen to see her first; but he no longer came forward to speak, as the rest did—only, perhaps, a touch of his hat and a step aside into the walls of some tent, and she knew she was avoided. A well-regulated young lady, of orthodox tendencies, would have held her head a little higher next time they met, and not have seen him at all; but this one was wofully deficient in those self-respecting bulwarks; so, when the next time she happened to be at the end of the avenue, she turned her steed directly across the path of his, and called a halt.

"Good-morning, Miss Rachel."

"*Klahowya, tillikum,*" she answered, bringing him back to a remembrance of his Chinook. "Jack Genesee, do you intend ever to come to see us— I mean to walk in like your old self, instead of looking through the window at night?"

"Looking—"

"Don't lie," she said coolly, "for I saw you, though no one else did. Now tell me what's wrong. Why won't you come in the house?"

"Society is more select in the Kootenai hills than it was a year ago;" he answered with a sort of defiance. "Do you reckon there is any woman in the house who would speak to me if she could get out of it—anyone except you?"

"Oh, I don't count."

"I had an 'invite' this morning," he added grimly —"not because they wanted me, but because your new friend over there wanted someone to give him points about the country; so I've got him to thank for being wanted at all. Now don't look like that—or think I'm kicking. It's a square enough deal so far as I'm concerned, and it stands to reason a man of my stamp hasn't many people pining for him in a respectable house. For the matter of that, it won't do you any good to be seen talking to me this long. I'm going."

"All right; so am I. You can go along."

"With you?"

"Certainly."

"I reckon not."

"Don't be so stubborn. If you didn't feel like coming, you would not have been at that window last night."

His face flushed at this thrust which he could not parry.

"Well, I reckon I won't go there again."

"No; come inside next time. Come, ride half-way to the ranch along, and tell me about that trip of yours to the Blackfeet. Major Dreyer gave you great praise for your work there."

"He should have praised you;" and her own color deepened at the significance of his words.

"I met Kalitan on his way to the ranch, as I came," she said in the most irrelevant way.

He looked at her very sharply, but didn't speak.

"Well, are you going to escort me home, or must I go alone?"

"It is daylight; you know every foot of the way, and you don't need me," he said, summing up the case briefly. "When you do, let me know."

"And you won't come?" she added good-naturedly. "All right. *Klahowya!*"

And then she moved out of his way, touched Betty with the whip, and started homeward. She rather expected to meet Kalitan again, but there was no sign of him on the road; and when she reached the house, found that youth ensconced among the pillows of the largest settee with the air of a king on a throne, and watching with long, unblinking stares Miss Fred, who was stumbling over the stitches of some crochet-work for the adornment of Miss Margaret.

"I'm so glad you've come!" she breathed gratefully. "He has me so nervous I can't count six; and Mrs. Hardy is taking a nap, and Aunty Luce has locked herself upstairs, and I never was stared so out of countenance in my life."

"I rather think that's a phase of Indian courtship," Rachel comforted her by saying; "so you have won a new admirer. What is it, Kalitan?"

He signified that his business was with the "Man-who-laughs," the term by which he designated Stuart.

"Mr. Stuart left the house just after you did," said Fred; "I thought, perhaps, to catch you."

"No, he didn't go my way. Well, you look comfortable,

Kalitan; and if you had the addition of another crazy patch cushion for your left elbow, you might stand a little longer wait—think so?"

Kalitan thought he could; and there he remained until Stuart arrived, flushed and rather breathless from his ride from somewhere.

"I was out on the road, but did not see you," said Rachel, on his entrance.

"That is likely enough," he answered. "I didn't want you to—or anyone else. "I'm not good company of late. I was trying to ride away from myself." Then he saw Kalitan, propped among the cushions. "Well," he said sharply; "what have you brought me?"

Kalitan answered by no word, but thrust his hand inside his hunting-shirt and brought forth an envelope, which he gave into the eager hands reaching for it.

Stuart gave it one quick glance, turning it in his hand to examine both sides, and then dropped it in his pocket and sat down by the window. Rachel could see it was a thick, well-filled envelope, and that the shape was the same used by Stuart himself, very large and perfectly square—a style difficult to duplicate in the Kootenai hills.

"You can go now, if you choose, Kalitan," she said, fearing his ease would induce him to stay all night, and filled with a late alarm at the idea of Tillie getting her eyes on the peaceful "hostile" and her gorgeous cushions; and without any further notice of Stuart, Kalitan took his leave.

When Rachel re-entered the room, a moment later, a letter was crisping into black curls in the fire-place, and the man sat watching it moodily.

All that evening there was scarcely question or answer to be got from Stuart. He sat by the fire, with Miss Margaret in his arms—her usual place of an evening; and through the story-telling and jollity he sat silent, looking, Jim said, as if he was "workin' hard at thinkin'."

"To-morrow night you must tell us a story," said Miss Fred, turning to him. "You have escaped now for—oh, ever so many nights."

"I am afraid my stock is about exhausted."

"Out of the question! The flimsiest of excuses," she decided. "Just imagine a new one, and tell it us instead of writing it; or tell us the one you are writing at now."

"Well, we will see when to-morrow comes;" and with that vague proposal Miss Fred had to be content.

But when the morrow came the Stuart looked as if there had been no night for him— at least no sleep; and Rachel, or even MacDougall himself, would not think of calling him Prince Charlie, as of old.

She was no longer so curious about him and that other man who was antagonistic to him. She had been fearful, but whatever knowledge they had of each other she had decided would not mean harm; the quiet days that had been let go by were a sort of guarantee of that.

But they seemed to have nerved Stuart up to some purpose, and the morning after the burning of the letter he appeared suddenly at the door of Genesee's shack, or the one Major Dreyer had turned over to him during his own absence.

From the inside Kalitan appeared, as if by enchantment, at the sound of a hand on the latch. Stuart,

with a gesture, motioned him aside, and evidently to Kalitan's own surprise, he found himself stepping out while the stranger stepped in. For perhaps a minute the Indian stood still, listening, and then, no sounds of hostilities coming to his ears, an expressive guttural testified to his final acquiescence, and he moved away. His hesitation showed that Rachel had not been the only one to note the bearing of those two toward each other.

But had he listened a minute longer, he might have heard the peace within broken by the voices that, at first suppressed and intense, rose with growing earnestness.

The serious tones of Stuart sounded through the thin board walls in expostulation, and again as if urging some point that was granted little patience; for above it the voice of Genesee broke in, all the mellowness gone from it, killed by the brutal harshness, the contemptuous derision, with which he answered some plea or proposition.

"Oh, you come to me now, do you?" he said, walking back and forth across the room like some animal fighting to keep back rage with motion, if one can imagine an animal trying to put restraint on itself; and at every turn his smoldering, sullen gaze flashed over the still figure inside the door, and its manner, with a certain calm steadfastness of purpose, not to be upset by anger, seemed to irritate him all the more. "So you come this time to lay out proposals to me, eh? And think, after all these years, that I'm to be talked over to what you want by a few soft words? Well, I'll see you d—d first; so you can strike the back trail as soon as you've a mind to."

"I shan't go back," said Stuart deliberately, "until I get what I came for."

The other answered with a short, mirthless laugh.

"Then you're located till doomsday," he retorted, "and doomsday in the afternoon; though I reckon that won't be much punishment, considering the attractions you manage to find up here, and the advantages you carry with you—a handsome face, a gentleman's manners, and an honest name. Why, you are begging on a full hand, Mister; and what are you begging to? A man that's been about as good as dead for years—a man without any claim to a name, or to recognition by decent people—an outlaw from civilization."

"Not so bad as that, Jack," broke in Stuart, who was watching in a sort of misery the harsh self-condemnation in the restless face and eyes of Genesee. "Don't be so bitter as that on yourself. You are unjust—don't I know?"

"The —— you say!" was the withering response to this appeal, as if with the aid of profanity to destroy the implied compliment to himself. "Your opinion may go for a big pile among your fine friends, but it don't amount to much right here. And you'd better beat a retreat, sir. The reputation of the highly respected Charles Stuart, the talented writer, the honorable gentleman, might get some dirty marks across it if folks knew he paid strictly private visits to Genesee Jack, a renegade squaw man; and more still if they guessed that he came for a favor—that's what you called it when you struck the shack, I believe. A favor! It has taken you a good while to find that name for it."

"No, it has not, Jack," and the younger man's earnestness of purpose seemed to rise superior to the taunts and sarcasm of the other. "It was so from the first, when I realized—after I knew—I didn't seem to

have thoughts for anything else. It was a sort of justice, I suppose, that made me want them when I had put it out of my power to reach them. You don't seem to know what it means, Jack, but I—I am homesick for them; I have been for years, and now that things have changed so for me, I—Jack, for God's sake, have some feeling! and realize that other men can have!"

Jack turned on him like a flash.

"You—you say that to me!" he muttered fiercely. "You, who took no count of anybody's feelings but your own, and thought God Almighty had put the best things on this earth for you to use and destroy! Killing lives as sure as if tney'd never drawn another breath, and forgetting all about it with the next pretty face you saw! If that is what having a stock of feeling leads a man to, I reckon we're as well off without any such extras."

Stuart had sat down on a camp-stool, his face buried in his hands, and there was a long silence after Genesee's bitter words, as he stood looking at the bent head with an inexplicable look in his stormy eyes. Then his visitor arose.

"Jack," he said with the same patience—not a word of retort had come from him—"Jack, I've been punished every day since. I have tried to forget it—to kill all memory by every indulgence and distraction in my reach—pursued forgetfulness so eagerly that people have thought me still chasing pleasure. I turned to work, and worked hard, but the practice brought to my knowledge so many lives made wretched as—as—well, I could not stand it. The heart-sickness it brought me almost drove me melancholy mad. The only bright thing in life was—the children—"

An oath broke from Genesee's lips.

"And then," continued Stuart, without any notice save a quick closing of the eyes as if from a blow, "and then they died—both of them. That was justice, too, no doubt, for they stayed just long enough to make themselves a necessity to me—a solace—and to make me want what I have lost. I am telling you this because I want you to know that I have had things to try me since I saw you last, and that I've come through them with the conviction that there is to be no content in life to me until I make what amends I can for the folly of the boy you knew. The thought has become a monomania with me. I hunted for months for you, and never found a trace. Then I wrote—there."

"You did!"

"Yes, I did—say what you please, do what you please. It was my only hope, and I took it. I told her I was hunting for you—and my purpose. In return I got only this," and he handed toward Genesee a sheet of paper with one line written across it. "You see—your address, nothing more. But, Jack, can't you see it would not have been sent if she had not wished—"

"That's enough!" broke in the other. "I reckon I've given you all the time I have to spare this morning, Mister. You're likely to strike better luck in some different direction than talking sentiment and the state of your feelings to me. I've been acquainted with them before—pretty much—and don't recollect that the effect was healthy."

"Jack, you will do what I ask?"

"Not this morning, sonny," answered the other, still with that altogether aggressive taunt in his

tone. "I would go back to the ranch if I was you, and by this time to-morrow some of them may make you forget the favor you want this morning. So long!"

And with this suggestion to his guest to vacate, he turned his back, sat down by the fire, and began filling a pipe.

"All right; I'll go, and in spite of your stubbornness, with a lighter heart than I carried here, for I've made you understand that I want to make amends, and that I have not been all a liar; that I want to win back the old faith you all had in me; and, Jack, if my head has gone wrong, something in my heart forbade me to have content, and that has been my only hope for myself. For I have a hope, and a determination, Jack, and as for anyone helping me to forget—well, you are wrong there; one woman might do it—for a while—I acknowledge that, but I am safe in knowing she would rather help me to remember."

Genesee wheeled about quickly.

"Have you dared—"

"No, I have not told her, if that is what you mean; why—why should I?"

But his denial weakened a little as he remembered how closely his impulse had led him to it, and how strong, though reasonless, that impulse had been.

The stem of the pipe snapped in Genesee's fingers as he arose, pushing the camp-stool aside with his foot, as if clearing space for action.

"Since you own up that there's someone about here that you—you've taken a fancy to—damn you!—I'm going to tell you right now that you've got to stop that! You're no more fit than I am to speak to her, or ask for a kind word from her, and I give you a pointer that if you try playing fast and loose with

her, there'll be a committee of one to straighten out the case, and do it more complete than that man did who was a fool ten years ago. Now, hearken to that —will you?"

And then, without waiting an answer, he strode out of the shack, slamming the door after him, and leaving his visitor in possession.

"I've got to show him, by staying right in these hills, that I am in earnest," Stuart decided, taking the seat his host had kicked aside, and stretching his feet out to the fire. "No use in arguing or pleading with him—there never was. But give him his own lead, and he will come around to the right point of view, though he may curse me up hill and down dale while he is doing it; a queer, queer fellow—God bless him! And how furious he was about that girl! Those two are a sort of David and Jonathan in their defense of each other, and yet never exchange words if they can help it—that's queer, too—it would be hard telling which of them is the more so. Little need to warn any man away from her, however; she is capable of taking very good care of herself."

There was certainly more than one of womankind at the ranch; but to hear the speech of those two men, one would doubt it; for neither had thought it necessary to even mention her name.

CHAPTER X.

THE TELLING OF A STORY.

"But you promised! Yes, you did, Mr. Stuart—didn't he, Mrs. Hardy? There, that settles it; so you see this is your evening to tell a story."

The protracted twilight, with its cool grays and purples, had finally faded away over the snow, long after the stars took up their watch for the night. The air was so still and so chill that the bugle-call at sunset had sounded clearly along the little valley from camp, and Fred thought the nearness of sound made a house seem so much more home-like. But after the bugle notes and the long northern twilight, had come the grouping of the young folks about the fire, and Fred's reminder that this was to be a "story" night.

"But," declared Stuart, "I can think of none, except a very wonderful one of an old lady who lived in a shoe, and another of a house marvelously constructed by a gentleman called Jack—"

But here a clamor arose from the rebels in the audience, and from Fred the proposal that he should read or tell them of what he was working on at present, and gaining at last his consent.

"But I must bring down some notes in manuscript," he added, "as part of it is only mapped out, and my memory is treacherous."

"I will go and get them," offered Fred. "No, don't you go! I'm afraid to let you out of the room, lest you may remember some late business at camp

and take French leave. Is the manuscript on the table in your room? I'll bring it."

And scarcely waiting either assent or remonstrance, she ran up the stairs, returning immediately with handfuls of loose sheets and two rolls of manuscript.

"I confiscated all there was in reach," she laughed. "Here they are; you pay no money, and you take your choice."

She was such a petite, pretty little creature, her witchy face alight with the confidence of pleasure to come; and looking down at her, he remarked:

"You look so much a spirit of inspiration, Miss Fred, that you had better not make such a sweeping offer, lest I might be tempted to choose you."

"And have a civil war on your hands," warned Rachel, "with the whole camp in rebellion."

"Not much; they don't value me so highly," confessed Fred. "They would all be willing to give me away."

"A willingness only seconded by your own." This from the gallant Lieutenant on the settee. "My child, this is not leap-year, and in the absence of your parent I—"

"Yes, I know. But as Captain Holt commands in papa's absence, I don't see what extra responsibility rests on your shoulders. Now, Mr. Stuart, all quiet along the Kootenai; go ahead."

"Not an easy thing to do," he answered ruefully, trying to sort the jumbled lot of papers she had brought him, and beginning by laying the rolls of manuscript on the table back of him, as if disposing of them. "You have seized on several things that we could not possibly wade through in one evening; but here is the sketch I spoke of. It is of camp-life, by the way,

and so open to criticism from you two veterans. It was suggested by a story I heard told at the Fort."

Just then a wild screech of terror sounded from the yard, and then an equally wild scramble across the porch. Everyone jumped to their feet, but Rachel reached the door first, just as Aunty Luce, almost gray from terror, floundered in.

"They's come!" she panted, in a sort of paralysis of fright and triumph of prophecy. "I done tole all you chillen! Injuns! right here—I seed 'em!"

Hardy reached for his gun, the others doing the same; but the girl at the door had darted out into the darkness.

"Rachel!" screamed Tillie, but no Rachel answered. Even Hardy's call was not heeded; and he followed her with something like an oath on his lips, and Stuart at his elbow.

Outside, it seemed very dark after the brightness within, and they stopped on the porch an instant to guide themselves by sound, if there was any movement.

There was—the least ominous of sounds—a laugh. The warlike attitude of all relaxed somewhat, for it was so high and clear that it reached even those within doors; and then, outlined against the background of snow, Stuart and Hardy could see two forms near the gate—a tall and a short one, and the shorter one was holding to the sleeve of the other and laughing.

"You and Aunty Luce are a fine pair of soldiers," she was saying; "both beat a retreat at the first glimpse of each other. And you can't leave after upsetting everyone like this; you must come in the house and reassure them. Come on!"

Some remonstrance was heard, and at the voice Hardy stepped out.

"Hello, Genesee!" he said, with a good deal of relief in his manner; "were you the scarecrow? Come in to the light, till we make sure we're not to be scalped."

And then, with a few words from the girl that the others could not hear, he walked beside her to the porch.

"I'm mighty sorry, Hardy," he said as they met. "I was a little shaky about Mowitza to-day, and reckoned I'd better make an extra trip over; but I didn't count on kicking up a racket like this—didn't even spot the woman till she screeched and run."

"That's all right," said Hardy reassuringly. "I'm glad you came, whether intentionally or by accident. You know I told you the other day—"

"Yes—I know."

Rachel and Stuart had entered the house ahead of them, and all had dropped back into their chosen points of vantage for the evening when assurance was given that the Indians belonged to Aunty's imagination; but for those short seconds of indecision Tillie had realized, as never before, that they were really within the lines of the Indian country.

Aunty Luce settled herself sulkily in the corner, a grotesque figure, with an injured air, eying Genesee with a suspicion not a whit allayed when she recognized the man who had brought the first customs of war to them—taking nocturnal possession of the best room.

"No need tell me he's a friend o' you all!" she grunted. "Nice sort o' friend you's comin' to, I say —lives with Injuns; reckon I heard—umph!"

This was an aside to Tillie, who was trying to keep her quiet, and not succeeding very well, much to the amusement of the others within hearing, especially Fred.

Genesee had stopped in the outer room, speaking with Hardy; and, standing together on the hearth, in the light of the fire, it occurred to the group in the other room what a fine pair they made—each a piece of physical perfection in his way.

"A pair of typical frontiersmen," said Murray; and Miss Fred was pleased to agree, and add some praise on her own account.

"Why, that man Genesee is really handsome," she whispered; "he isn't scowling like sin, as he was when I saw him before. Ask him in here, Mrs. Tillie; I like to look at him."

Mrs. Tillie had already made a movement toward him. Perhaps the steady, questioning gaze of Rachel had impelled her to follow what was really her desire, only—why need the man be so flagrantly improper? Tillie had a great deal of charity for black sheep, but she believed in them having a corral to themselves, and not allowing them the chance of smutching the spotless flocks that have had good luck and escaped the mire. She was a good little woman, and a warm-hearted one; and despite her cool condemnation of his wickedness when he was absent, she always found herself, in his presence, forgetting all but their comradeship of that autumn, and greeting him with the cordiality that belonged to it.

"I shall pinch myself for this in the morning," she prophesied, even while she held out her hand and reminded him that he had been a long time deciding about making them a visit.

Her greeting was much warmer than her farewell had been the morning he left—possibly because of the relief in finding it was not a "hostile" at their gate. And he seemed more at ease, less as if he need to put himself on the defensive—an attitude that had grown habitual to him, as it does to many who live against the rulings of the world.

She walked ahead of him into the other room, thus giving him no chance to object had he wanted to; and after a moment's hesitation he followed her, and noticed, without seeming to look at any of them, that Rachel stood back of Stuart's chair, and that Stuart was looking at him intently, as if for recognition. On the other side, he saw the Lieutenant quietly lay his hand on Miss Fred's wrist that was in shadow, just as she arose impulsively to offer her hand to the man whom she found was handsome when he had the aid of a razor. A beard of several weeks' growth had covered his face at their first meeting; now there was only a heavy mustache left. But she heeded that silent pressure of the wrist more than she would a spoken word, and instead of the proffered hand there was a little constrained smile of recognition, and a hope given that Aunty Luce had not upset his nerves with her war-cries.

He saw it all the moment he was inside the door—the refined face of Stuart, with the graciousness of manner so evidently acceptable to all, the sheets of manuscript still in his fingers, looking as he stood there like the ruling spirit of the cheery circle; and just outside the circle, though inside the door, he—Genesee—stood alone, the fact accented sharply to him by Miss Fred's significant movement; and with the remembrance of the fact came the quick, ever-ready

spirit of bravado, and his head was held a trifle higher as he smiled down at her in apparent unconcern.

"If it is going to make Aunty Luce feel more comfortable to have company, I'm ready to own up that my hair raised the hat off my head at first sight of her—ain't quite settled into place yet;" and he ran his fingers through the mass of thick dark hair. "How's that, Aunty?"

"Umph!" she grunted, crouching closer to the wall, and watching him distrustfully from the extreme corner of her eye.

"Have you ever been scared so bad you couldn't yell, Aunty?" he asked, with a bland disregard of the fact that she was just then in danger of roasting herself on the hearth for the purpose of evading him. "No? That's the way you fixed me a little while back, sure enough. I was scared too bad to run, or they never would have caught me."

The only intelligible answer heard from her was: "Go 'long, you!"

But he did not "go 'long." On the contrary, he wheeled about in Tillie's chair, and settled himself as if that corner was especially attractive, and he intended spending the evening in it—a suggestion that was a decided surprise to all, even to Rachel, remembering his late conservatism.

Stuart was the only one who realized that it was perhaps a method of proving by practical demonstration the truth of his statement that he was a Pariah among the class who received the more refined character with every welcome. It was a queer thing for a man to court slights, but once inside the door, his total unconcern of that which had been a galling mortification to him was a pretty fair proof of Stuart's theory. He

talked Indian wars to Hardy, and Indian love-songs to Hardy's wife. He coolly turned his attention to Lieutenant Murray, with whom his acquaintance was the slightest, and from the Lieutenant to Miss Fred, who was amused and interested in what was, to her, a new phase of a "squaw man;" and her delight was none the less keen because of the ineffectual attempts to in any way suppress this very irregular specimen, whose easy familiarity was as silencing as his gruff curtness had been the day they met him first.

Beyond an occasional remark, his notice was in no way directed to Rachel—in fact, he seemed to avoid looking at her. His attention was much more interested in the other two ladies, who by degrees dropped into a cordiality on a par with that of Aunty Luce; and he promptly took advantage of it by inviting Miss Fred to go riding with him in the morning.

The man's impudence and really handsome face gave Fred a wicked desire to accept, and horrify the Lieutenant and Tillie; but one glance at that little matron told her it would not do.

"I have an engagement to ride to-morrow," she said rather hurriedly, "else—"

"Else I should be your cavalier," he laughed. "Ah, well, there are more days coming. I can wait."

A dead silence followed, in which Rachel caught the glance Genesee turned on Stuart—a smile so mirthless and with so much of bitter irony in it that it told her plainly as words that the farce they had sat through was understood by those two men, if no others; and, puzzled and eager to break the awkward silence, she tried to end it by stepping into the breach.

"You have totally forgotten the story you were to

tell us," she said, pointing to the sheets of manuscript in Stuart's hand; "if we are to have it to-night, why not begin?"

"Certainly; the story, by all means," echoed Fred. "We had it scared out of our heads, I guess, but our nerves are equal to it now. Are you fond of stories, Mr.—Mr. Genesee?"

"Uncommon."

"Well, Mr. Stuart was about to read us one just as you came in; one he wrote since he came up in these wilds—at the Fort, didn't you say, Mr. Stuart? You know," she added, turning again to Genesee—"you know Mr. Stuart is a writer—a romancer."

"Yes," he answered slowly, looking at the subject of their discourse as if examining something rare and curious; "I should reckon—he—might be."

The contempt in the tone sent the hot blood to Stuart's face, his eyes glittering as ominously as Genesee's own would in anger. An instant their gaze met in challenge and retort, and then the sheets of paper were laid deliberately aside.

"I believe, after all, I will read you something else," he said, reaching for one of the rolls of manuscript on the table; "that is, with your permission. It is not a finished story, only the prologue. I wrote it in the South, and thought I might find material for the completion of it up here; perhaps I may."

"Let us have that, by all means," urged Tillie. "What do you call it?"

"I had not thought of a title, as the story was scarcely written with the idea of publication. The theme, however, which is pretty fairly expressed in the quotation at the beginning, may suggest a title. I will leave that to my audience."

"And we will all put on our thinking-caps and study up a title while you tell the story, and when it is ended, see which has the best one to offer. It will be a new sort of game with which to test our imaginations. Go on. What is the quotation, to begin with?"

And to the surprise of the listeners, he read that old command from Deuteronomy, written of brother to brother:

"Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray; thou shalt in any case bring them again unto thy brother.

"And with all lost things of thy brother's, which he hath lost and thou hast found, shalt thou do likewise.

"In any case thou shalt deliver him the pledge again when the sun goeth down."

Stuart ceased after those lines, looking up for comment, and seeing enough in the man's face opposite him.

"Oh, go on," said Rachel. "Never mind about the suggestions in that heading—it is full of them; but give us the story."

"It is only the prologue to a story," he reminded her; and with no further comment began the manuscript.

Its opening was that saddest of all things to the living—a death-bed—and that most binding of all vows—a promise given to the dying.

There was the picture drawn of a fragile, fair little lady, holding in her chilling fingers the destiny of the lives she was about to leave behind—young lives—one a sobbing, wondering girl of ten, and two boys; the oldest perhaps eighteen, an uncouth, strong-faced youth, who clasped hands with another boy several years younger, but so fair that few would think them brothers, and only the most youthful would ever have

been credited as the child of the little woman who looked so like a white lily.

But the other was the eldest son—an Esau, however, who was favorite with neither father nor mother; with no one, in fact, who had ever known the sunny face and nature of the most youthful—an impulsive, loving disposition that only shone the brighter by contrast with the darker-faced, undemonstrative one whom even his mother never understood.

And the shadow of that misunderstanding was with them even at the death-bed, where the Jacob sobbed out his grief in passionate protests against the power that would rob him, and the Esau stood like a statue to receive her commands. Back of them was the father, smothering his own grief and consoling his favorite, when he could, and the one witness to the seal that was set on the three young lives.

Her words were not many—she was so weak—but she motioned to the girl beside the bed. "I leave her to you," she said, looking at them both, but the eyes, true to the feeling back of them, wandered to the fairer face and rested there. "The old place will belong to you two ere many years—your father will perhaps come after me;" and she glanced lovingly toward the man whom all the world but herself had found cold and hard in nature. "I promised long ago—when her mother died—that she should always have a home, and now I have to leave the trust to you, my sons."

"We will keep it," said the steady voice of Esau, as he sat like an automaton watching her slowly drifting from them; while Jacob, on his knees, with his arms about her, was murmuring tenderly, as to a child, that all should be as she wished—her trust was to be theirs always.

"And if either of you should fail or forget, the other must take the care on his own shoulders. Promise me that, too, because—"

The words died away in a whisper, but her eyes turned toward the Esau. He knew too bitterly what it meant. Though only a boy, he was a wild one—people said a bad one. His father had pronounced him the only one of their name who was not a gentleman. He gambled and he drank; his home seemed the stables, his companions, fast horses and their fast masters; and in the eyes of his mother he read, as never before, the effect that life had produced. His own mother did not dare trust the black sheep of the family, even though he promised at her death-bed.

A wild, half-murderous hate arose in him at the knowledge—a hate against his elegant, correctly mannered father, whose cold condemnation had long ago barred him out from his mother's sympathy, until even at her death-bed he felt himself a stranger—his little mother—and he had worshiped her as the faithful do their saints, and like them, afar off.

But even the hate against his father was driven back at the sight of the wistful face, and the look that comes to eyes but once.

"We promise—I promise that, so help me God!" he said earnestly, and then bent forward for the first time, his voice breaking as he spoke. "Mother! mother! say just once that you trust—that you believe in me!"

Her gaze was still on his face; it was growing difficult to move the eyes at will, and the very intensity of his own feelings may have held her there. Her eyes widened ever so little, as if at some

revelation born to her by that magnetism, and then—

"My boy, I trust—"

The words again died in a whisper; and raising his head with a long breath of relief, he saw his father drop on his knees by the younger son. Their arms were about each other and about her. A few broken, disjointed whispers; a last smile upward, beyond them; a soft, sighing little breath, after which there was no other, and then the voice of the boy, irrepressible in his grief, as his love, broke forth in passionate despair, and was soothed by his father, who led him sobbing and rebellious from the bedside—both in their sorrow forgetting that third member of the family, who sat so stoically through it all, until the little girl, their joint trust, half-blind with her own tears, saw him there so still and as pathetically alone as the chilling clay beside him. Trying to say some comforting words, she spoke to him, but received no answer. She had always been rather afraid of this black sheep—he was so morose about the house, and made no one love him except the horses; but the scene just past drew her to him for once without dread.

"Brother," she whispered, calling him by the name his mother had left her; "dear brother, don't you sit there like that;" and a vague terror came to her as he made no sign. "You—you frighten me."

She slipped her hand about his neck with a child's caressing sympathy, and then a wild scream brought the people hurrying into the room.

"He is dead!" she cried, as she dropped beside him; "sitting there cold as stone, and we thought he didn't care! And he is dead—dead!"

But he was not dead—the physician soon assured

them of that. It was only a cataleptic fit. The emotion that had melted the one brother to tears had frozen the other into the closest semblance to stone that life can reach, and still be life.

The silence was thrilling as Stuart's voice ceased, and he stooped for the other pages laid by his chair.

A feeling that the story on paper could never convey was brought to every listener by the something in his voice that was not tears, but suggested the emotion back of tears. They had always acknowledged the magnetism of the man, but felt that he was excelling himself in this instance. Tillie and Fred were silently crying. Rachel was staring very steadily ahead of her, too steadily to notice that the hand laid on Genesee's revolver at the commencement of the story had gradually relaxed and dropped listless beside him. All the strength in his body seemed to creep into his eyes as he watched Stuart, trusting as much to his eyes as his ears for the complete comprehension of the object in or back of that story. In the short pause the author, with one sweeping glance, read his advantage—that he was holding in the bonds of sympathy this man whom he could never conquer through an impersonal influence. The knowledge was a ten-fold inspiration—the point to be gained was so great to him; and with his voice thrilling them all with its intensity, he read on and on.

The story? Its finish was the beginning of this one; but it was told with a spirit that can not be transmitted by ink and paper, for the teller depended little on his written copy. He knew it by heart—knew all the tenderness of a love-story in it that was careless of the future as the butterflies that coquette on a

summer's day, passing and repassing with a mere touch of wings, a challenge to a kiss, and then darting hither and yon in the chase that grows laughing and eager, until each flash of white wings in the sun bears them high above the heads of their comrades, as the divine passion raises all its votaries above the commonplace. Close and closer they are drawn by the spirit that lifts them into a new life; high and higher, until against the blue sky there is a final flash of white wings. It is the wedding by a kiss, and the coquettings are over—the sky closes in. They are a world of their own.

Such a love-story of summer was told by him in the allegory of the butterflies; but the young heart throbbing through it was that of the woman-child who had wept while the two brothers had clasped hands and accepted her as the trust of the dying; and her joyous teacher of love had been the fair-haired, fine-faced boy whose grief had been so great and whose promises so fervent. It is a very old story, but an ever-pathetic one—that tragedy of life; and this one, without thought of sin, with only a fatal fondness on her part, a fatal desire for being loved on his, and a season's farewell to be uttered, of which they could speak no word—the emotions that have led to more than one tragedy of soul. And one of the butterflies in this one flitted for many days through the flowers of her garden, shy, yet happy, whispering over and over, "His wife, his wife!" while, traveling southward, the other felt a passion of remorse in his heart, and resolved on multitudinous plans for the following of a perfection of life for the future.

All this he told—too delicately to give offense, yet too unsparingly not to show that the evil wrought in a

moment of idle pastime, of joyous carelessness, is as fatal in its results as the most deliberate act of preconceived wickedness.

And back of the lives and loves of those two, with their emotional impulses and joyous union of untutored hearts, there arose, unloved and seemingly unloving, the quiet, watchful figure of the Esau.

Looking at his life from a distance, and perhaps through eyes of remorse, the writer had idealized that one character, while he had only photographed the others; had studied out the deeds back of every decided action, and discovered, or thought he did, that it was the lack of sympathy in his home-life had made a sort of human porcupine of him, and none had guessed that, back of the keen darts, there beat a pulse hungry for words such as he begged from his mother at the last—and receiving, was ready to sacrifice every hope of his, present or future, that he might prove himself worthy the trust she had granted him, though so late.

Something in the final ignoring of self and the taking on his own shoulders the responsibilities of those two whom his mother had loved—something in all that, made him appear a character of heroic proportions, viewed from Stuart's point of view. He walked through those pages as a live thing, the feeling in the author's voice testifying to his own earnestness in the portrayal—an earnestness that seemed to gain strength as he went along, and held his listeners with that convincing power until the abrupt close of the scene between those two men in the old New Orleans house.

Everyone felt vaguely surprised and disturbed when he finished—it was all so totally unlike Stuart's stories with which he had entertained them before.

They were unprepared for the emotions provoked; and there was in it, and in the reading, a suggestion of something beyond all that was told.

The silence was so long that Stuart himself was the first to lift his eyes to those opposite, and tried to say carelessly:

"Well?"

His face was pale, but not more so than that of Genesee, who, surprised in that intent gaze, tried to meet his eyes steadily, but failed, faltered, wavered, and finally turned, as if seeking in some way his former assurance, to Rachel. And what he saw there was the reaching out of her hand until it touched Stuart's shoulder with a gesture of approving comradeship.

"Good!" she said tersely; "don't ever again talk of writing for pastime—the character of that one man is enough to be proud of."

"But there are two men," said Fred, finding her voice again, with a sense of relief: "which one do you mean?"

"No," contradicted Rachel, with sharp decision; "I can see only one—the Esau."

Stuart shrank a little under her hand, not even thanking her for the words of praise; and, to her surprise, it was Genesee who answered her, his eyes steady enough, except when looking at the author of the story.

"Don't be too quick about playing judge," he suggested; and the words took her back like a flash to that other time when he had given her the same curt advice. "May be that boy had some good points that ain't put down there. May be he might have had plans about doing the square thing, and something

upset them; or—or he might have got tangled up in a lariat he wasn't looking for. It's just natural bad luck some men have of getting tangled up like that; and may be he—this fellow—"

Fred broke out laughing at his reasoning for the defense.

"Why, Mr. Genesee," she said gleefully, "an audience of you would be an inspiration to an author or actor; you are talking about the man as if he was a flesh and blood specimen, instead of belonging to Mr. Stuart's imagination."

"Yes, I reckon you're right, Miss," he said, rising to his feet, with a queer, half-apologetic smile; "you see, I'm not used to hearing folks read—romances." But the insolent sarcasm with which he had spoken of the word at first was gone.

The others had all regained their tongues, or the use of them; and comment and praise was given the author—not much notice taken of Genesee's opinion and protest. His theories of the character might be natural ones; but his own likelihood for entanglements, to judge by his reputation, was apt to prejudice him, rendering him unduly charitable toward any other fellow who was unlucky.

"My only objection to it," said Tillie, "is that there is not enough of it. It seems unfinished."

"Well, he warned us in the beginning that it was only a prologue," reminded her husband; "but there is a good deal in it, too, for only a prologue—a good deal."

"For my part," remarked the Lieutenant, "I don't think I would want anything added to it. Just as it stands, it proves the characters of the two men. If it was carried further, it might gain nothing, and leave nothing for one's imagination."

"I had not thought of that," said Stuart; "in fact, it was only written to help myself in analyzing two characters I had in my head, and could not get rid of until I put them on paper. Authors are haunted by such ghosts sometimes. It is Miss Fred's fault that I resurrected this one to-night—she thrust on me the accidental remembrance."

"There are mighty few accidents in the world," was Genesee's concise statement, as he pulled on his heavy buckskin gloves. "I'm about to cut for camp. Going?" This to the Lieutenant.

After that laconic remark on accidents, no further word or notice was exchanged between Stuart and Genesee; but it was easily seen that the story read had smoothed out several wrinkles of threatened discord and discontent. It had at least tamed the spirit of the scout, and left him more the man Rachel knew in him. Her impatience at his manner early in the evening disappeared as he showed improvement; and just before they left, she crossed over to him, asking something of the snows on the Scot Mountain trail, his eyes warming at the directness of her speech and movement, showing to any who cared to notice that she spoke to him as to a friend; but his glance turned instinctively from her to Stuart. He remembered watching them that day as they rode from camp.

"But what of Davy?" she repeated; "have you heard any word of him?"

"No, and I'm ashamed to say it," he acknowledged; "I haven't been to see him at all since I got back. I've had a lot of things in my head to keep track of, and didn't even send. I'll do it, though, in a day or so—or else go myself."

"I'm afraid he may be sick. If the snow is not

bad, it's a wonder he has not been down. I believe I will go."

"I don't like you to go over those trails alone," he said in a lower tone; "not just now, at any rate."

"Why not now?"

"Well, you know these Indian troubles may bring queer cattle into the country. The Kootenai tribe would rather take care of you than do you harm; but—well, I reckon you had better keep to the ranch."

"And you don't reckon you can trust me to tell me why?" she said in a challenging way.

"It mightn't do any good. I don't know, you see, that it is really dangerous, only I'd rather you'd keep on the safe side; and—and—don't say I can't trust you. I'd trust you with my life—yes, more than that, if I had it!"

His voice was not heard by the others, who were laughing and chatting, it was so low; but its intensity made her step back, looking up at him.

"Don't look as if I fright you," he said quickly; "I didn't come in here for that. You shouldn't have made me come, anyway—I belong to the outside; coming in only helps me remember it."

"So that was what put you in such a humor. I thought it was Stuart."

"You did?"

"Yes; I know you don't like him, but—I think you are prejudiced."

"Oh, you do?" And she saw the same inscrutable smile on his face that she had noticed when he looked at Stuart.

"There—there," she laughed, throwing up her hand as if to check him, "don't tell me again that I am too anxious to judge people; but he is a good fellow."

"And you are a good girl," he said warmly, looking down at her with so much feeling in his face that Stuart, glancing toward them, was startled into strange conjectures at the revelation in it. It was the first time he had ever seen them talking together. "And you're a plucky girl, too," added Genesee, "else you wouldn't stand here talking to me before everyone. I'll remember it always of you. *Tillikum*, good-night."

PART FOURTH.

ONE SQUAW MAN.

CHAPTER I.

LAMONTI.

The next morning awoke with the balmy air of spring following the sunrise over the snow—a fair, soft day, with treachery back of its smiles; for along in the afternoon the sky gathered in gray drifts, and the weather-wise prophesied a big snow-fall.

All the morning Genesee wrote. One page after another was torn up, and it was the middle of the afternoon before he finally finished the work to his satisfaction, did it up in a flat, square package, and having sealed it securely, called Kalitan.

"You take this to the express office at the station," he said; "get a paper for it—receipt; then go to Holland's—to the bank store; give them this," and he handed a slip of written paper. "If they give you letter, keep it careful—so," and he took from his shirt-pocket a rubber case the size of an ordinary envelope. Evidently Kalitan had carried it before, for he opened a rather intricate clasp and slipped the bit of paper into it.

"All good—not get wet," he said, picking up the larger package. "The Arrow fly down; come back how soon?"

"Send this," pointing to the package, "the first thing in the morning; then wait until night for the stage

from Pacific that brings the mail—may be if road is bad it will not come till next morning."

"Kalitan wait?"

"Yes, wait till the stage comes, then ask for letter, and keep your eyes open; watch for bad whites. *Klahowya!*"

Watching Kalitan start off with that package, he drew a long breath of relief, like a man who had laid down some burden; and leaving the avenue and the camp behind, he struck out over the trail toward Hardy's, not even stopping to saddle a horse. He was going to have a "*wau-wau*" with Mowitza.

He had barely entered the stable door when Tillie came across the yard, with a shawl thrown over her head and looking disturbed.

"Oh, is it you, Mr. Genesee?" she said, with a little sigh of disappointment; "I thought it was Hen or some of the others come back. Did you meet them?"

"Yes; going up the west valley after stock."

"The west valley! Then they won't get back before dark, and I—I don't know what to do!" and the worried look reached utter despair as she spoke.

"What's up? I can ride after them if you say so."

"I don't know what to say. I should have told Hen at noon; but I knew it would put him out of patience with Rachel, and I trusted to her getting back all right; but now, if the snow sets in quick, and it threatens to, she may get lost, and I—"

"Where is she?"

"Gone to Scot's Mountain."

An energetic expletive broke from his lips, unchecked even by the presence of the little woman who had seemed a sort of Madonna to him in the days a year old. And the Madonna did not look much

shocked. She had an idea that the occasion was a warrant for condemnation, and she felt rather guilty herself.

"One of that Kootenai tribe came here this morning, and after jabbering Chinook with him, she told me Davy MacDougall was sick, and she was going to ride up there. Hen was out, and she wouldn't listen to Miss Fred and myself—just told us to keep quiet and not tell him where she was, and that she would get back for supper; so we haven't said a word; and now the snow is coming, she may get lost."

Tillie was almost in tears; it was easy to see she was terribly frightened, and very remorseful for keeping Rachel's command to say nothing to Hardy.

"Did that Indian go with her?"

"No; and she started him back first, up over that hill, to be sure he would not go over to the camp. I can't see what her idea was for that."

Genesee could—it was to prevent him from knowing she was going up into the hills despite his caution.

"There is not a man left on the place, except Jim," continued Tillie, "or I would send them after her. But Jim does not know the short-cut trail that I've heard Rachel speak of, and he might miss her in the hills; and—oh, dear! oh, dear!"

Genesee reached to the wooden peg where his saddle hung, and threw it across Mowitza's back.

In a moment Tillie understood what it meant, and felt that, capable as he might be, he was not the person she should send as guardian for a young girl. To be sure, he had once before filled that position, and brought her in safety; but that was before his real character was known.

Tillie thought of what the rest would say, of what Stuart would think—for she had already bracketed Rachel and Stuart in her match-making calendar. And she was between several fires of anxiety and indecision, as she noted the quick buckling of straps, and the appropriation of two blankets from the hanging shelf above them.

"Are you—can you get someone to go for me—from the camp?" she asked hurriedly. He turned and looked at her with a smile in his eyes.

"I reckon so," he answered briefly; and then, seeing her face flushed and embarrassed, the smile died out as he felt what her thoughts were. "Who do you want?" he added, leading Mowitza out and standing beside her, ready to mount.

She did not even look up. She felt exactly as she had when she told Hen that she knew she was right, and yet felt ashamed of herself.

"I thought if you could spare Kalitan—" she hesitated. "She knows him, and he has been with her so often up there, no one else would know so well where to look for her—that is, if you could spare him," she added helplessly.

"The chances are that I can," he said in a business-like way; "and if I was you I'd just keep quiet about the trip, or else tell them she has an Indian guide—and she will have. Can you give me a bottle of brandy and some biscuits?"

She ran into the house, and came back with them at once. He was mounted and awaiting her.

"Kalitan has left the camp—gone over that hill;" and he motioned rather vaguely toward the ridge across the valley. "I'll just ride over and start him from there, so he won't need to go back to camp

for rations. Don't you worry; just keep quiet, and she'll come back all right with Kalitan."

He turned without further words, and rode away through the soft flakes of snow that were already beginning to fall. He did not even say a good-bye; and Tillie, hedged in by her convictions and her anxiety, let him go without even a word of thanks.

"I simply did not dare to say 'thank you' to him," she thought, as he disappeared. And then she went into the house and eased Fred's heart and her own conscience with the statement that Kalitan, the best guide Rachel could have, had gone to meet her. She made no mention of the objectionable character who had sent Kalitan.

By the time of sunset, Scot's Mountain was smothered in the white cloud that had closed over it so suddenly, and the snow was still falling straight down, and so steadily that one could not retrace steps and find tracks ten minutes after they were made. Through the banked-up masses a white-coated, unrecognizable individual plowed his way to MacDougall's door, and without ceremony opened it and floundered in, carrying with him what looked enough snow to drown a man; but his eyes were clear of it, and a glance told him the cabin had but one occupant.

"When did she leave?" was the salutation MacDougall received, after a separation of six weeks.

"Why, Jack, my lad!"

"Yes, that's who it is, and little time to talk. Has she been here?"

"The lass—Rachel? She has that—a sight for sore eyes—and set all things neat and tidy for me in no time;" and he waved his hand toward the clean-swept

hearth, and the table with clean dishes, and a basket with a loaf of new bread showing through. "But she did na stay long wi' me. The clouds were comin' up heavy, she said, and she must get home before the snow fell; an' it snows now?"

"Well, rather. Can't you see out?"

"I doubt na I've had a nap since she left;" and the old man raised himself stiffly from the bunk. "I got none the night, for the sore pain o' my back, but the lass helped me. She's a rare helpful one."

"Which trail did she take?" asked Genesee impatiently.

He saw the old man was not able to help him look for her, and did not want to alarm him; but to stand listening to comments when every minute was deepening the snow, and the darkness—well, it was a test to the man waiting.

"I canna say for sure, but she spoke o' the trail through the Maples being the quickest way home; likely she took it."

Genesee turned to the door with a gesture of despair. He had come that way and seen no sign of her; but the trail wound above gulches where a misstep was fatal, and where a horse and rider could be buried in the depths that day and leave no trace.

At the door he stopped and glanced at Davy MacDougall, and then about the cabin.

"Are you fixed all right here in case of being snowed in?" he asked.

"I am that—for four weeks, if need be; but does it look like that out?"

"Pretty much. Good-bye, Davy;" and he walked back and held out his hand to the old man, who looked at him wonderingly. Though their friendship was

earnest, they were never demonstrative, and Genesee usually left with a careless *klahowya!*

"Why, lad—"

"I'm going to look for her, Davy. If I find her, you'll hear of it; if I don't, tell the cursed fools at the ranch that I—that I sent a guide who would give his life for her. Good-bye, old fellow—good-bye."

Down over the mountain he went, leading Mowitza, and breaking the path ahead of her—slow, slow work. At that rate of travel, it would be morning before he could reach the ranch; and he must find her first.

He found he could have made more speed with snow-shoes and without Mowitza—the snow was banking up so terribly. The valley was almost reached when a queer sound came to him through the thick veil of white that had turned gray with coming night.

Mowitza heard it, too, for she threw up her head and answered it with a long whinny, even before her master had decided what the noise was; but it came again, and then he had no doubt it was the call of a horse, and it was somewhere on the hill above him.

He fastened Mowitza to a tree, and started up over the way he had come, stopping now and then to call, but hearing no answer—not even from the horse, that suggested some phantom-like steed that had passed in the white storm.

Suddenly, close to him, he heard a sound much more human—a whistle; and in a moment he plunged in that direction, and almost stumbled over a form huddled against a fallen tree. He could not see her face. He did not need to. She was in his arms, and she was alive. That was enough. But she *lay* strangely still for a live woman, and he felt in his pocket for

that whisky-flask; a little of the fiery liquor strangled her, but aroused her entirely.

"Jack?"

"Yes."

"I knew if I called long enough you would come; but I can only whisper now. You came just in time."

'How long have you been here?"

"Oh, hours, I think. I started for the gulch trail, and couldn't make it with snow on the ground. Then I tried for the other trail, but got lost in the snow—couldn't even find the cabin. Help me up, will you? I guess I'm all right now."

But she was not, quite, for she staggered wofully; and he caught her quickly to him and held her with one arm, while he fumbled for some matches with the other.

"You're a healthy-looking specimen," was the rather depreciating verdict he gave at sight of the white, tired face. She smiled from the pillow of his shoulder, but did not open her eyes; then the match flickered and went out, and he could see her no more.

"Why didn't you stay at home, as I told you to?"

"Didn't want to."

"Don't you know I'm likely to catch my death of cold tramping here after you?"

"No," with an intonation that sounded rather heartless; "you never catch cold."

The fact that she had not lost her old spirit, if she had her voice, was a great point in her favor, and he had a full appreciation of it. She was tired out, and hoarse, but still had pluck enough to attempt the trip to the ranch.

"We've got to make it," she decided, when the subject was broached; "we can make it to-night as well

as to-morrow, if you know the trail. Did you say you had some biscuits? Well, I'm hungry."

"You generally are," he remarked, with a dryness in no way related to the delight with which he got the biscuits for her and insisted on her swallowing some more of the whisky. "Are you cold?"

"No—not a bit; and that seems funny, too. If it hadn't been such a soft, warm snow, I would have been frozen."

He left her and went to find the mare, which he did without much trouble; and in leading her back over the little plateau he was struck with a sense of being on familiar ground. It was such a tiny little shelf jutting out from the mountain.

Swathed in snow as it was, and with the darkness above it, he felt so confident that he walked straight out to where the edge should be if he was right. Yes, there was the sudden shelving that left the little plot inaccessible from one side.

"Do you know where we are, my girl?" he asked as he rejoined her.

"Somewhere on Scot's Mountain," she hazarded; the possessive term used by him had a way of depriving her of decided opinions.

"You're just about the same place where you watched the sun come up once—may-be you remember?"

"Yes."

He had helped her up. They stood there silent what seemed a long time; then he spoke:

"I've come here often since that time. It's been a sort of a church—one that no one likely ever set foot in but you and me." He paused as if in hesitation; then continued: "I've wished often I could see you here again in the same place, just because I got so fond of it;

and I don't know what you think of it, but this little bit of the mountain has something witched in it for me. I felt in the dark when my feet touched it, and I have a fancy, after it's all over, to be brought up here and laid where we stood that morning."

"Jack," and her other hand was reached impulsively to his, "what's the matter—what makes you speak like that now?"

"I don't know. The idea came strong to me back there, and I felt as if you—you—were the only one I could tell it to, for you know nearly all now—all the bad in me, too; yet you've never been the girl to draw away or keep back your hand if you felt I needed it. Ah, my girl, you are one in a thousand!"

He was speaking in the calmest, most dispassionate way, as if it was quite a usual thing to indulge in dissertations of this sort, with the snow slowly covering them. Perhaps he was right in thinking the place witched.

"You've been a good friend to me," he continued, "whether I was near or far—MacDougall told me things that proved it; and if my time should come quick, as many a man's has in the Indian country, I believe you would see I was brought here, where I want to be."

"You may be sure of it," she said earnestly; "but I don't like to hear you talk like that—it isn't like you. You give me a queer, uncanny feeling. I can't see you, and I am not sure it is Jack—*nika tillikum*—I am talking to at all. If you keep it up, you will have me nervous."

He held her hand and drew it up to his throat, pressing his chin against the fingers with a movement that was as caressive as a kiss.

"Don't you be afraid," he said gently; "you are afraid of nothing else, and you must never be of me. Come, come, my girl, if we're to go, we'd better be getting a move on."

The prosaic suggestion seemed an interruption of his own tendencies, that were not prosaic. The girl slipped her fingers gently but decidedly from their resting-place so near his lips, and laid her one hand on his arm.

"Yes, we must be going, or"— and he knew she was smiling, though the darkness hid her—"or it will look as if there are two witched folks in our chapel—our white chapel—to-night. I'm glad we happened here, since the thought is any comfort to you; but I hope it will be many a day before you are brought here, instead of bringing yourself."

He took her hand, and through the white masses turned their faces down the mountain. The mare followed meekly after. The stimulant of bread and whisky— and more, the coming of this man, of whom she was so stubbornly confident— had acted as a tonic to Rachel, and she struggled through bravely, accepting little of help, and had not once asked how he came to be there instead of the ranchmen.

Perhaps it was because of their past association, and that one night together when he had carried her in his arms; but whatever he was to the other people, he had always seemed to her a sort of guardian of the hills and all lost things.

She did not think of his presence there nearly so much as she did of those ideas of his that seemed "uncanny." He, such a bulwark of physical strength, to speak like that of a grave-site! It added one more to the contradictions she had seen in him.

Several things were in her mind to say to him, and not all of them pleasant. She had heard a little of the ideas current as to his Indian sympathies, and the doubt with which he was regarded in camp; and, while she defended him, she many times felt vexed that he cared so little about defending himself. And with the memory of the night before, and feminine comments at the ranch after he had gone, she made an attempt to storm his stubbornness during a short breathing-spell when they rested against the great bole of a tree.

"Genesee, why don't you let the other folks at the ranch, or the camp, know you as I do?" was the first break, at which he laughed shortly.

"They may know me the best of the two."

"But they don't; I know they don't; you know they don't."

"Speak for yourself," he suggested; "I'm not sure either way, and when a man can't bet on himself, it ain't fair to expect his friends to. You've been the only one of them all to pin faith to me, with not a thing to prove that you had reason for it; it's just out-and-out faith, nothing else. What they think don't count, nor what I've been; but if ever I get where I can talk to you, you'll know, may be, how much a woman's faith can help a man when he's down. But don't you bother your head over what they think. If I'm any good, they'll know it sometime; if I ain't, you'll know that, too. That's enough said, isn't it? And we'd better break away from here; we're about the foot of the mountain, I reckon."

And then he took possession of her hand again, and led her on in the night; and she felt that her attempt had been a failure, except that it showed how

closely he held her regard, and she was too human not to be moved by the knowledge. Yes, he was very improper, as much so as most men, only it had happened to be in a way that was shocking to tenderfeet lucky enough to have families and homes as safeguards against evil. He was very disreputable, and, socially, a great gulf would be marked between them by their friends. But in the hills, where the universe dwindled to earth, sky, and two souls, they were but man and woman; and all the puzzling things about him that were blameful things melted away, as the snow that fell on their faces. She felt his strong presence as a guard about her, and without doubt or hesitation she kept pace beside him.

Once in the valley, she mounted Betty, and letting Mowitza follow, he walked ahead himself, to break the trail—a slow, slavish task, and the journey seemed endless. Hour after hour went by in that slow march —scarcely a word spoken, save when rest was necessary; and the snow never ceased falling — a widely different journey from that other time when he had hunted and found her.

"You have your own time finding the trail for me when I get lost," she said once, as he lifted her to the saddle after a short rest.

"You did the same thing for me one day, a good while ago," he answered simply.

The night had reached its greatest darkness, in the hours that presage the dawn, when they crossed the last ridge, and knew that rest was at last within comparatively easy reach. Then, for the first time, Genesee spoke of his self-imposed search.

"I reckon you know I'm an Indian?" he said, by way of preface.

"I don't know anything of the sort."

"But I am—a regular adopted son in the Kootenai tribe, four years old; so if they ask you if an Indian guide brought you home, you can tell them yes. Do you see?"

"Yes, I see, but not the necessity. Why should I not tell them you brought me?"

"May be you know, and may be you don't, that I'm not supposed to range far from camp. Kalitan was to go for you. Kalitan had some other work, and sent a Kootenai friend of his. The friend's name is Lamonti. Can you mind that? It means 'the mountain.' I come by it honest—it's a present Grey Eagle made me. If they ask questions about your guide, just put them off some way—tell them you don't know where he's gone to; and you won't. Now, can you do that?"

"I can, of course; but I don't like to have you leave like this. You must be half-dead, and I—Jack, Jack, what would I have done without you!"

He was so close, in the darkness, that in throwing out her hand it touched his face, one of the trivial accidents that turn lives sometimes. He caught it, pressing it to his lips, his eyes, his cheek.

"Don't speak like that, unless you want to make a crazy man of me," he muttered. "I can't stand everything. God! girl, you'll never know, and I—can't tell you! For Christ's sake, don't act as if you were afraid—the only one who has ever had faith in me! I think that would wake up all the devil you helped put asleep once. Here! give me your hand again, just once—just to show you trust me. I'll be worth it— I swear I will! I'll never come near you again!"

The bonds under which he had held himself so long

had broken at the touch of her hand and the impulsive tenderness of her appeal. Through the half sob in his wild words had burst all the repressed emotions of desolate days and lonely nights, and the force of them thrilled the girl, half-stunned her, for she could not speak. A sort of terror of his broken, passionate speech had drawn her quickly back from him, and she seemed to live hours in that second of indecision. All her audacity and self-possession vanished as a bulwark of straws before a flood. Her hands trembled, and a great compassion filled her for this alien by whose side she would have to stand against the world. That certainty it must have been that decided her, as it has decided many another woman, and ennobled many a love that otherwise would have been commonplace. And though her hands trembled, they trembled out toward him, and fell softly as a benediction on his upturned face.

"I think you will come to me again," she said tremulously, as she leaned low from the saddle and felt tears as well as kisses on her hands, "and you are worth it now, I believe; worth more than I can give you."

A half-hour later Rachel entered the door of the ranch, and found several of its occupants sleepless and awaiting some tidings of her. In the soft snow they had not heard her arrival until she stepped on the porch.

"I've been all night getting here," she said, glancing at the clock that told an hour near dawn, "and I'm too tired to talk; so don't bother me. See how hoarse I am. No; Kalitan did not bring me. It was a Kootenai called Lamonti. I don't know where he has gone—wouldn't come in. Just keep quiet and let me get to bed, will you?"

CHAPTER II.

A PHILOSOPHICAL HORSE-THIEF.

An hour before dawn the wind came, hurtling down through the mountains and moaning along the valleys; before it came the flying snow in great chilly sheets, as it was lifted from the high places and spread in every nook that would warrant its safe-keeping.

And through its fitful gusts Genesee walked into camp, his tracks filling, as he left them, by the eager flakes. There seemed a strange alertness about the place, for so early an hour—even through the commotion, blissful and despairing, in his own breast, he noticed it as the guard hailed him, and when he replied, he heard from that individual an excited exclamation of astonishment.

"By jolly, if it ain't Genesee!"

"I reckon it is," he answered, and passed on, too tired, yet elated by his night's work, to care whether or not his absence had been commented on.

But the door of the shack had barely closed on him than one of the several lanterns that he had noticed floating like stars along the snow stopped at his door, then a knock, and the entrance of a very wide-awake looking corporal.

"You are to report to Captain Holt at once," was the message he brought.

"What's up?" and the boot that was half-way off was yanked on again.

"That's all the message I was given."

"The —— you say; well, trot along."

His own frowning perplexity was no more decided than that of Captain Holt, as he looked up to notice the entrance of the scout—and there was little of friendliness in the look.

"You sent a man to say you wanted me."

"Yes, I sent a man about two hours ago to say I wanted you," was the ironical reply. "You were not to be found. Have you any report to make?"

"Not that I know of," he said curtly. A sort of quiet antagonism had always been felt between the chief of scouts and the new commander, but this was the first time any expression had been given it, and Genesee's intolerance quickly responded to the manner of the officer that had in it both dislike and distrust.

"Then you refuse to tell where you spent the night?"

The light in Genesee's eyes flashed sudden defiance.

"Yes; if it comes to that, and that's the way you put it, I do."

"You had better think twice before you give that answer," advised Captain Holt, his face paling with anger at the insubordination; "and another question to be put to you is, Where is the half-breed, your runner?"

"I don't know as that concerns you, either," answered Genesee coolly. "He is my Indian, and neither of us belonging to the United States Army, we can leave camp when it suits us. But I don't mind telling you I sent him to Holland's yesterday."

"For what purpose?"

"My own business."

"The same thing that took you from camp at three yesterday and kept you out all night?"

"Just so."

"Then, since you refuse to answer a very necessary question, you may—until I have an opportunity of investigating an absence that is, to say the least, suspicious—you may consider yourself under arrest."

"What in ——"

"For horse-stealing," finished the Captain calmly.

Genesee's hand dropped to his belt in a suggestive manner, and from the door two guards stepped forward. He turned to look at them, and the ridiculous idea of his arrest quelled the quick rage that had flashed up in his face.

"You needn't have troubled yourself with these protectors," he remarked, "for I reckon there isn't much I'd want to do that they would stop me from; and as for you—this is a piece of dirty work for some end. I'm ready to be put under arrest, just to see some fun when your commander gets back. And now may be you'll just tell me whose horse I stole?"

"It is not one horse, but one-half the stock belonging to the company, that was run off by your Kootenai friends last night," replied Captain Holt grimly; "and as your disappearance was likely helpful to them, and a matter of mystery to the command, you will be debarred from visiting them again until the matter is investigated. Even the explanation is more than your insolence deserves. You can go back to your quarters."

"It's an infernal lie!" burst out Genesee wrathfully. "No Kootenai touched your stock. It's been some thieving Blackfeet and their white friends; and if you interfere with the Kootenais, and try to put it on

their shoulders, you'll get yourself in trouble—big trouble."

"When I want your advice, I will ask for it," was the natural reply to the contradiction and half threat. Genesee walked to the door with the guards, and turning, came back.

"Captain Holt," with more of appeal in manner than one would look for in him, "I'm ready to take my chances in this business, and I'm not trying to give advice, but I'm going to ask you, on the reputation you know I have in Indian matters, to be mighty careful what you do or what you let the men do toward the Kootenai people. They're only waiting the Major's return to send word to camp that their arms and fighting braves are willing to help the troops against the Blackfeet if they're needed. I know it. Their messenger is likely to come any day; and it will be a bad thing for our cause if their friendliness is broken by this suspicion."

"Your cause?"

"No, I haven't got any," he retorted. "I'm not talking for myself—I'm out of it; but I mean the cause of lives here in the valley—the lives on both sides—that would be lost in a useless fight. It's all useless."

"And you acknowledge, then, that you don't consider the cause of the whites as your own cause?" asked the Captain quietly.

"Yes!" he burst out emphatically, "I'll own up to you or anyone else; so make me a horse-thief on that, if you can! I'd work for the reds quicker than for you, if there was anything to be gained by fighting for them; but there isn't. They'd only kill, and be killed off in the end. If I've worked on your side, it's been to save lives, not to take them; and if I've got

any sympathies in the matter, it's with the reds. They've been dogged to death by your d—d 'cause.' Now you've got my ideas in a nut-shell."

"Yes," agreed the Captain sarcastically, "very plainly expressed. To establish entirely your sympathy with your red friends, it only remains for you to be equally frank and report your movements of last night."

"Go to —— and find out;" and with this climax of insubordination, the scout left the presence of the commanding officer and marched back to his shack, where he took possession of the bunk and was sound asleep in five minutes, and altogether undisturbed by the fact that a guard was stationed at the door of the impromptu prison with orders to shoot him if an attempt to escape was made.

Captain Holt's leniency with the scout, who simply ignored military rule and obedience in a place where it was the only law, was, for him, phenomenal.

But the one thing in Genesee's favor was his voluntary return to camp; and until he learned what scheme was back of that, the Captain was obliged, with the thought of his superior officer in mind and the scout's importance, to grant him some amenities, ignore his insolence, and content himself with keeping him under guard.

But the guard outside was not nearly so strong in its control of him as the bonds of sleep that held him through the morning and well-nigh high noon. He had quickly summed up the case after his interview with Holt, and decided that in two days, at most, the Major would be back, and that the present commander would defer any decided movement toward the Kootenais until then. As for the horses, that was a bad business; but if they chose to put him under

arrest, they plainly took from him the responsibility of hunting for stock. So he decided, and in the freedom of any further care, dropped asleep. Once a guard came in with some breakfast, which he ate drowsily, and turned again to his pillow.

"When that fool, the commanding officer, concludes to let up on this arrest, there's likely to be some work to do—I'll fortify myself while I have the chance;" and that determination, added to his exhaustion, served to make his rest a very deliberate affair, not to be disturbed by trifles.

Several things occurred through that winter's morning that were far from trifling; yet no sound came to him of them, not even when a shot on the ridge echoed across the valley, and ten minutes later was followed by several more, and accompanied by yells, heard faintly, but clear enough to tell that a skirmishing party was having a shooting-match with someone across the hills. In three minutes every horse left in camp was mounted and scurrying fast as their feet could carry them through the drifts, and the horseless ones, whose stock had been run off in the muffled silence of the snow-storm, remained unwillingly behind.

At the end of the avenue Lieutenant Murray caught sight of Stuart and Hardy, riding toward camp. There was a hallooed invitation to join, another of acceptance, and the civilians joined the irregular cavalcade and swept with them over the hill, where the sounds of shots were growing fainter—evidently a retreat and a chase—toward which they rode blindly.

Through all of it their chief of scouts slept unconcernedly; a solid ten hours of rest was taken posses-

sion of before he aroused himself to care whether it was daylight or darkness.

"Major come yet?" was the first query.

"No."

"Am I still under arrest?"

"Yes."

"Then bring me something to eat. Past chuck?"

On being informed that the midday meal had been ended two hours before, his next query was whether anyone from the ranch had been to camp; but the guard thought not—a reply most grateful to the prisoner.

"Suppose you tell me something of the horses being run off," he suggested. "Oh, yes, I reckon I'm supposed to know all about it," he added; "but, just to pass the time, suppose you tell me your side of it."

There was not much to tell. Hardy's men had been riding around after stray stock until late; had passed camp after ten o'clock. About one in the morning the snow was falling thick; a little racket was heard in the long shed where the horses were tied, and the sentry, thinking some of Hardy's stray stock had wandered in there, tramped around with a light to see what was wrong. He had barely reached the end of the corral when someone from behind struck him over the head. In falling, his gun was discharged; and when investigations were made, it was found that nearly half the horses, about forty head, had been quietly run off through the snow, and the exploded gun was all that saved the rest.

The trail was hot, and pursuit began, but the thieves evidently knew the country, while the troops did not; and every moment lost in consultation and conjecture

was gained by the people ahead, until the wind rose and the trail was buried in the snow.

The followers had only returned to camp a few minutes before Genesee was reported back; but the man surmised that if the troops did not get the horses, they were taking their pay out of the hides of the red-skins.

"How's that?" demanded Genesee, with the quick, perplexed frown that was as much anxiety as displeasure.

"Well, a young cub of a Siwash came a-riding along to camp about noon, as large as life and independent as a hog on ice, and Denny Claflin—you know him, his horse was roped in by them last night—well, he called the buck to halt, as he'd a perfect right to do, and got no more notice than if the wind had whistled. Denny hates an Injun as the devil does holy water, and being naturally riled over last night, he called to halt, or he'd fire. Well, Mr. Siwash never turned his head, and Denny let him have it."

"Killed him?"

"Dead as a door-nail. Right over the ridge north. Our boys were just coming in, after skirmishing for signs from last night. They heard the shot, and rode up; and then, almost before they saw them, some ambushed Injuns bust out on them like all-possessed. They'd come with the young one, who was sent ahead, you see. Well, there was a go-as-you-please fight, I guess, till our men got out from camp, and chased them so far they haven't showed up since. Some of us went out afoot to the ridge, and found the dead buck. We buried him up there, and have been keeping an eye open for the boys ever since."

"Did Captain Holt go?"

"You bet! and every other man that had a horse

to go on; even that Mr. Stuart and Hardy from the ranch went."

"And they haven't showed up?"

"Naw."

No more questions were asked, and the guard betook himself to his pipe and enjoyment of the warm room, for intense cold had followed in the wake of the snow.

And the prisoner? The man on watch eyed dubiously the dark face as it lounged on the bunk. Aroused and refreshed by rest, he drifted away from the remembrance of his prison by living over with tender eyes the victory of the night before. Once he had seen it was possible for her to care for him—that once of a year ago, before she knew what he was; but lately—well, he thought her a plucky, cool-headed girl, who wouldn't go back on a friend, and her stanchness had shown that; but the very frank and outspoken showing had taken from him any hope of the warmer feeling that had existed in the old days, when she had likened him to a Launcelot in buckskin. The hope? His teeth set viciously as he thought of it as a hope. What right had he for such a wish? What right had he to let go of himself as he had done, and show her how his life was bound up in hers? What a hopeless tangle it was; and if she cared for him, it meant plainly enough that he was to repay her by communicating its hopelessness to her.

If she cared! In the prosaic light of day he even attempted to tell himself that the victory of the night might have been in part a delusion; that she had pitied him and the passion she had raised, and so had stooped from the saddle. Might it not have been only that? His reason told him—Perhaps; and then all the

wild unreason in the man turned rebel, and the force of a tumultuous instinct arose and took possession of him—of her, for it gave her again into his arms, and the laws of people were as nothing. She was his by her own gift; the rest of the world was blotted out.

CHAPTER III.

"THE SQUAW WHO RIDES."

At the ranch a strange cloak of silence hung around the household in regard to the horse-stealing. The men, hearing of the night raid, had endeavored to keep it from the women for fear of giving them uneasiness, but had not altogether succeeded. Jim had frustrated that attempt by forgetting, and blurting out at the dinner-table something about Genesee's arrest.

"It isn't true; it can't be true!" and Rachel turned with such an appeal in her tired eyes that Andrews dropped his own.

"It's true, Miss; he's accused of knowin' all about it, even if he didn't help. It's supposed to be his Kootenai friends that did it, and they say he's mighty close-mouthed over it; that tells against him. I hope to God it ain't true, for he seemed a mighty good man; but he's under guard at the camp; won't allow folks to see him, I hear—leastwise, no Injuns."

Rachel glanced at the others, but found in their faces no strong partisanship for Genesee. Tillie and Fred were regretful, but not hopeful.

"It seems a shame that such a fine-looking fellow should be a squaw man," said the Major's daughter; "but since he is one, there is not much to be hoped of him, though papa did have a wonderful lot of faith in this one."

Rachel's eyes lightened at the words. "What day do they look for your father back?" she asked quickly.

"To-day or to-morrow, though this snow may hinder them some."

"Well, he can't get here any too soon," chipped in the loquacious Jim. "I reckon they—"

And then his discourse was cut short by the toe of Andrews' boot under the table. Although the horse-stealing was known at the ranch, and now the suspicion of Genesee, yet there was one thing that Andrews and Ivans had maneuvered to keep quiet, and that was the absence of Hardy and Stuart, and the fact that hostile Indians had descended from the hills.

Apocryphal stories had been told Tillie of an early supper her husband and guest had eaten at camp, and a ride they had taken after stock overlooked the night before; and the hours dragged on, the night came, and the two conspirators were gaining themselves the serious anxiety they had endeavored to shield the women from, and Jim, once outside the door, was threatened with instant annihilation if he let his tongue run so far ahead of his wit again.

The ladies had decided not to tell Rachel about Genesee—Tillie had so clear a remembrance of her stubborn friendliness for that outlaw; but Jim had settled the question of silence, and all the weariness dropped from her at thought of what that accusation meant to him—death. Once she got up with the stong light of hope in her eyes, and running across the snow in the dark, opened the door of the stable where Jim was bedding the horses.

"Jim!" she called sharply; "when was it the stock was run off from camp—what time?"

"Early this mornin'," answered that youth sulkily. He had just received the emphatic warning against "tattling."

"This morning? What time this morning?"

"Oh, early; afore daylight."

Before daylight! She had gained a wild hope that it was during the time they were together; but from Jim's vague suggestion they had returned just about the time it had occurred—in time for it. She turned hopelessly toward the house, then hesitated and came back.

"Jim."

"Well?"

"Is Mowitza here?"

"Yes; can't you see?"

But she could not see very clearly. Something in her eyes blinded her as she thought of Mowitza and the glad days when they knew each other first; and of Mowitza's master, and his voice as she had heard it last—and the words! Oh, the despairing, exultant, compelling words! And then, after he had gone from her, could it be so?

"Take good care of the mare, Jim, until—until he needs her."

And when the girl re-entered the house, Tillie turned with a lecture to deliver on the idiocy of going out without a wrap; but it was not spoken, for a glance into Rachel's eyes told she had been crying—something so unusual as to awe the little woman into silence, and perplex her mightily. Headstrong as the girl had been in her championship of Genesee, Tillie had always been very sure that the cause was mainly Rachel's contrariness; and to associate him with the tears never entered her mind.

And the evening wore on, and about the fire there were conjectures about the protracted stay of Hardy and Stuart, and wonderment from Fred that not a man

had called from the camp all day and evening. Rachel sat silent, thinking—thinking, and finding a glimmer of hope in the thought that Major Dreyer would soon be back; there, she felt, would be no prejudiced mind come to judgment.

At last they were startled by the sound of a step on the porch, and all looked around, glad of the return of the two wanderers, when the door opened, and there entered Kalitan—a very tired-looking Arrow, and with something in his face that was more than fatigue —anxiety.

"Rashell Hardy?" he said, and deliberately walked into the other room, intimating that she was to follow and the interview to be private—an interview conducted in low tones and in Chinook, after which Rachel asked Aunty Luce to give him some supper; for he was very tired, and would not go on to camp until morning.

The night before had been one of wakefulness, because of Rachel's absence, and all were sleepy enough to hunt beds early; and leaving a lunch on the table for the absent ones, the hearth was soon deserted— Ivans and Andrews, however, agreeing to sleep with one eye open.

But both must have closed unawares, or else the moccasined feet that stole out in the darkness must have been very, very light, and the other figure beside him very stealthy; for no alarm was given, no ear took note. It was late, past eleven o'clock, when the sentry challenged a horse and rider who were coming as briskly and nonchalantly into camp as if it had been eleven in the morning, and occasioning as much astonishment as had Genesee, when it was seen to be Miss Hardy.

"Rather late to be out alone, Miss, ain't it?" asked the sentry, as she stopped to chat with him of the continued absence of the men.

"Is it?" she laughed. "I don't know what you call late over here; but I suppose we of the ranch would be considered night-owls. I rode over with some mail that came late, and thought I'd hear if there was any news before we went to bed. Who's in command?"

"Lieutenant Kennedy; but he's turned in an hour ago."

"Good gracious! Do you folks go to bed with the sun? I have a magazine for him, but he can wait for it, then, until to-morrow. Tell him I will expect him over."

"Yes, Miss."

Just then from along the avenue sauntered a soldierly figure, who drew near at the sound of voices.

"There comes Sergeant Kelp," remarked the sentry. "He's on night duty in Kennedy's place."

Instantly the girl turned to the officer in charge.

"Well, I'm glad to find someone up and awake," she said, leaning over to shake hands with him. "It helps to keep me from seeming altogether a night-prowler. I came over to get the returns, if there were any. The folks are getting anxious at the ranch."

"Naturally," answered the young fellow. "I would have called this evening, but am on duty. Don't let the ladies worry if you can help it. We are likely to hear from the men before morning. Every scout we had went with them, and without horses we can't do much but just stay here and wait; all the boys find it mighty hard work, too."

"You remind me of half my mission, Sergeant, when you speak of your scouts. I brought over some mail,

and everyone I wanted to see is either away or asleep. But how about your chief of scouts—is he asleep, too?"

And it seemed to her that her heart ceased beating, the wind ceased blowing, and the stars ceased twinkling above the snow, as she waited for his disgusted reply.

"No; not by a good deal. I never saw such a crank as that fellow! When everything was smooth sailing, that man would skulk around camp without a word to speak to anyone, the surliest white man I want to see; but now that he's jailed for horse-stealing, tied up and watched in the shack, I'm blest if he doesn't put in the time singing. Yes, he does; been at it ever since taps. I threatened to have him gagged if he disturbed the boys; but they say he don't. Roberts is the only one who has to listen to it; says he never heard so many Indian songs in his life. But it's a mighty queer streak of luck for a man to be musical over."

Rachel laughed, and agreed. "I have a letter for him, too," she added. "Look here; I'd like to take it to him myself, and get to hear some of those songs. Can I? I know it's rather late, but if he is awake, it don't matter, I suppose; or is no one allowed to see him?"

"Indians only are tabooed, but none of them have shown up, not even his runner, and I guess you can speak to him if you want to; it isn't a thing most ladies would like to do, though," he added.

"I suppose not," she said good-humoredly; "but then, I've known the man for something over a year, and am not at all afraid—in fact, I'd rather like to do it and have something to horrify the ladies at the ranch with. Think of it! An interview with a horse-

thief—perhaps a duet with him all alone in the middle of the night. Oh, yes, that's too good to miss. But I must hurry up, or they will be sending someone after me."

At the door of the shack, however, she paused a moment in what might be trepidation, her hand laid hesitatingly on the saddle, as if in doubt whether to remount or enter the shanty, from which she could hear the low refrain of a song of their *cultus corrie*—"*Tsolo, tso-lo!*"

"The guard will not leave the door?" she whispered; and Sergeant Kelp concluded that, after all, she was pretending to greater nerve than she possessed.

"Never fear," he returned; "I will call him out to hold your horse, and he won't stir from the door. By the way, I'll have someone to see you home when you're ready to go. Good-night."

And then the guard was called out, and a moment later the visitor slipped in, the prisoner never turning his head or noticing the exchange until she spoke.

"Jack!"

He turned then quick enough.

"God A'mighty, girl! What are you doing here?"

She thought of the ears, possibly listening ears, on the other side of the door, and her tone was guarded and careless, as it had been with the Sergeant, as she laughed and answered in Chinook:

"To pay a visit; what else?"

She noticed with exultation that it was only rope he was tied with—his hands and his feet, as he sat on the bunk—a plaited rope of rawhide; strong enough when strengthened by a guard opposite and a loaded gun; but without the guard and with a keen knife!

She checked him in the midst of a passionate protest against her coming.

"I am here, so that fact is settled," she said quietly. "I didn't come for fun, and we haven't any time to lose. I brought you a letter; it is in this," she said.

"You have seen Kalitan?"

He took from her the rubber case and extracted the letter from it, but scarcely noticed it, his eyes were turned so anxiously to her face.

"Yes; and you had better read it," she advised, walking back to the door.

"Rachel—"

"Read it; let them see you!" and she opened the door wide and stepped out as if to make sure of the guard's presence.

"It's all right, Miss, I'm here," he whispered, looking past her to the prisoner opening the letter and throwing the envelope in the fire. "I'll not stir from here with the beast. Don't be uneasy;" and then she turned back and closed the door. She had seen he was not close enough to listen.

"Jack," she said, coming back to him, "you must get out of this. Mowitza is at the door; I have brought the things you will need. Can you make a dash for it and get away?"

He looked at her in utter amazement.

"I didn't know it until to-night," she continued; "this is your chance, before the others get back—if they ever do get back! God help them!"

"What do you mean? Where are they?" And his hand, tied as it was, caught her own quickly.

"They are in a death-trap, in that gully back of the Tamahnous ground. You know where—right over the

peak from the old mine. They've been there since dark, hedged in by the Kootenais, who are only waiting for daylight to come. Heaven help our men when it does come!"

"The Kootenais? It can't be them. They are not hostile."

"Not yesterday," she agreed bitterly, "but they are to-day. They sent a messenger of good-will to camp this morning, the grandson of Grey Eagle. He was shot down, almost in sight of camp, by one of the soldiers, and the braves he had brought, the best in the tribe, attempted a rescue. Our cavalry pursued them, and were led into that ravine. The Indians knew the ground, and our men didn't. At the end of the narrow pass, the reds rolled boulders down the mountain and closed it up, and then cut off retreat; and there they are, waiting for daylight or starvation —God knows what!"

"Who told you this?"

"Kalitan; he met an Indian trapper who had passed the gulch but a little while before. He came direct to me. The whites here blame you for helping the trouble—the beginning it, the—"

"You mean the horse-stealing?" he said looking at her curiously.

"Yes." Her eyes were on the floor; she did not see that scrutiny. "And you must get out of here before word comes of those men penned up there. There would be no waiting for trial then; they would shoot you."

"And that is what you came for?"

"Yes;" and she drew a sharp knife—an Indian knife —from her belt under the shawl. With a quick stroke, she severed the knotted cords and they fell from his

wrists; then she dropped on her knees, a flash, once, twice, of the blade in the light, and he stooped and raised her.

"You are doing this for me," he said, drawing her to him, "without knowing whether I deserve shooting or not?"

"Don't speak of that part of it!" she burst out. "When I let myself think, I feel as if I am going crazy!"—then she stopped short. "And a crazy woman just now would handicap you some. No, Jack, we need all of our wits for to-night—here," and unfastening the belt from under her shawl, she buckled it about him. It contained two loaded revolvers.

"It's the first time I've armed you as I've seen sweethearts or wives do," she said, looking up at him. "It may be the last. I only ask one thing—you will not, unless it is the last means of saving your own life, turn one of these against my friends?"

Even then, the weakness of the man in him came uppermost.

"But if it is to save my own life?"

Her hands went quickly over her eyes, as if to shut out sight or thought.

"Don't ask me—only go—and—take care of yourself!"

He caught the hands from her eyes, kissing her fiercely—exultantly.

"Then I am first to you—nearer than all the rest! My girl, you've proved it to-night, and I'll show you! If you know how to pray, pray for me to-night—for me and the men in that death-trap. Do you hear? I am going now. Here is this letter; it will tell you all. If I never come back, tell Prince Charlie he is right at last—that I believe him. He will understand. My girl—mine—it is not an eternal good-bye.

I will come back if I live, and I will have to live long enough for that! Here, just once, kiss me, my girl—my girl!"

And the next instant she was flung from that embrace and fell with a faint scream to the floor.

The guard dashed in, and was dextrously tripped by an unlooked-for figure close to the wall, his gun wrenched from him, and a staggering blow dealt that sent him to his knees.

Clouds had swept over the cold stars, and the sentry could see but dimly the equestrian figure that came clattering down the avenue.

"Hadn't you better wait for company, Miss?" he called, but no answer was given; and in much wonder, he was about to call again, when pistol-shots from the shack aroused the camp. He called a halt; that was heeded no more than his question, and he sent a random shot after the flying figure—not for the purpose of hitting the girl, but to impress on her the duty of a sentry and some idea of military rule. Before the last dull thud of hoofs in the snow had ceased to be heard, Roberts had staggered to the door, firing wildly, and calling to stop the prisoner—to stop the horse-thief.

But there was nothing in the camp to do it with. He was gone—everyone was blaming everybody else for it; but no one thought of blaming the girl who lay in a dead faint on the floor, where he had flung her, that none might think she had let him go willingly. And Miss Rachel was cared for very tenderly, and a man was sent to the ranch to assure Mrs. Hardy of her safe-keeping, waking Mrs. Hardy out of a delicious sleep, and mystifying her completely by the information. The only one about the house who might have helped

elucidate happened to be remarkably sound asleep at the time the messenger arrived—an Arrow encased in the quiver of rest.

CHAPTER IV.

THROUGH THE LOST MINE.

An hour before day in the Kootenais! Not the musical dawn of that early autumn, when all the woods were a-quiver with the fullness of color and sound; when the birds called to each other of the coming sun, and the little rills of the shady places moistened the sweet fern and spread its fragrance around and about, until one could find no couch so seductive as one on the amber grasses with the rare, all-pervading scents of the virgin soil.

Not any of those seductions solaced or made more bitter the watch of the men who stood hopeless in the snow of that treacherous ravine. Not even a fire dared be lit all the night long, because of those suddenly murderous natives, who, through knowing the secrets of the cleft earth, held their fates at the mercy of eager bronze hands.

"And one man who knew the country could have prevented this!" groaned Hardy, with a thought of the little wife and Miss Margaret. How would they listen to this story?

"If we had Genesee with us, we would not have been penned up in any such fashion as this," decided Murray, stamping back and forward, as many others were doing, to keep their blood in circulation—for what?

"Hard to tell," chimed in the scout from Idaho. "Don't know as it's any better to be tricked by one's own gang than the hostiles. Genesee, more'n likely, was gettin' ready for this when he run off the stock."

Just then something struck him. The snow made a soft bed, but the assailant had not stopped to consider that, and quick as light his knee was on the fallen man's chest.

"Take it back!" he commanded, with the icy muzzle of a revolver persuading his meaning into the brain of the surprised scout. "That man is no horse-thief. Take it back, or I'll save the Indians the trouble of wasting lead on you."

"Well," reasoned the philosopher in the snow, "this ain't the d—t best place I've ever been in for arguin' a point, an' as you have fightin' ideas on the question, an' I haven't any ideas, an' don't care a —— of a sight, I'll eat my words for the time bein', and we'll settle the question o' that knock on the head, if the chance is ever given us to settle anything, out o' this gully."

"What's this?" and though only outlines of figures could be distinguished, the voice was the authoritative one of Captain Holt. "Mr. Stuart, I am surprised to find you in this sort of thing, and about that squaw man back in camp. Find something better to waste your strength for. There is no doubt in my mind now of the man's complicity—"

"Stop it!" broke in Stuart curtly; "you can hold what opinion you please of him, but you can't tell me he's a horse-thief. A squaw man and adopted Indian he may be, and altogether an outlaw in your eyes; but I doubt much your fitness to judge him, and advise you not to call him a thief until you are able to prove your words, or willing to back them with all we've got left here."

All they had left was their lives, and Stuart's unexpected recklessness and sharp words told them his was

ready as a pledge to his speech. None cared, at that stage of the game, to question why. It was no time for quarrels among themselves when each felt that with the daylight might come death.

Afterward, when the tale was told, no man could remember which of them first discovered a form in their midst that had not been with them on their entrance—a breathless, panting figure, that leaned against one of their horses.

"Who is it?" someone asked.

"What is it?"

But no one answered—only pressed closer, with fingers on triggers, fearing treachery. And then the panting figure raised itself from its rest on the horse's neck, rose to a stature not easily mistaken, even in that light, and a familiar, surly voice spoke:

"I don't reckon any of you need be puzzled much to find out; ain't been such a long time since you saw me."

"By ——, it's Genesee!"

And despite the wholesale condemnation of the man, there was not a heart that did not grow lighter with the knowledge. They knew, or believed, that here was the one man who had the power to save them, if he cared to use it; but would he?

"Jack!"

Someone, at sound of his voice, pushed through the crowd with outstretched hand. It was not refused this time.

"I've come for you," was all Genesee said; then he turned to the others.

"Are you willing to follow me?" he asked, raising his voice a little. "The horses can't go through where I've got to take you; you'll have to leave them."

A voice close to his elbow put in a word of expostulation against the desertion of the horses. Genesee turned on the speaker with an oath.

"You may command in a quiet camp, but we're outside of it now, and I put just a little less value on your opinion than on any man's in the gulch. This is a question for every man to answer for himself. You've lost their lives for them if they're kept here for daylight. I'll take them out, if they're ready to come."

There was no dissenting voice. Compared with the inglorious death awaiting them in the gulch, the deliverance was a God-send. They did not just see how it was to be effected; but the strange certainty of hope with which they turned to the man they had left behind as a horse-thief was a thing surprising to them all, when they had time to think of it—in the dusk of the morning, they had not.

He appeared among them as if a deliverer had materialized from the snow-laden branches of cedar, or from the close-creeping clouds of the mountain. They had felt themselves touched by a superstitious thrill when he was found in their midst; but they knew that, come as he might, be what he would, they had in him one to whom the mountains were as an open book, as the Indians knew when they tendered him the significant name of Lamonti.

Captain Holt was the only rebel on the horse question; to add those to the spoils of the Indians was a bitter thing for him to do.

"It looks as if we were not content with them taking half our stock, but rode up here to leave them the rest," he said, aggressively, to nobody in particular. "I've a notion to leave only the carcasses."

"Not this morning," broke in the scout. "We've no

time to wait for work of that sort. Serves you right to lose them, too, for your d—d blunders. Come along, if you want to get out of this—single file, and keep quiet."

It was no time for argument or military measures for insubordinates; and bitter as the statement of inefficiency was, Captain Holt knew there were some grounds for it, and knew that, in the eyes of the men, he was judged from the same stand-point. The blind raid with green scouts did seem, looking back at it, like a headlong piece of folly. How much of folly the whole attack was, they did not as yet realize.

It was not far that Genesee led them through the stunted, gnarled growth up the steep sides of the gulch. Half-way to the top there were, in the summer-time, green grass and low brush in which the small game could hide; but above that rose a sheer wall of rock clear up to where the soil had gathered and the pines taken root.

In the dusk they could see no way of surmounting it; yet there was no word of demur, not even a question. He was simply their hope, and they followed him.

And their guide felt it. He knew few of them liked him personally, and it made his victory the greater; but even above that was the thought that his freedom was due to the girl who never guessed how he should use it.

He felt, some way, as if he must account to her for every act she had given him the power to perform, as if his life itself belonged to her, and the sweetness of the thought was with him in every step of the night ride, in every plan for the delivery of the men.

At the very foot of the rock wall he stopped and turned to the man next him. It was Hardy.

"It's a case of 'crawl' here for a few lengths; pass the word along, and look out for your heads."

The next instant he had vanished under the rock wall—Hardy following him; then a flicker of light shone like a star as a guide for the others, and in five minutes every man of them had wriggled through what seemed but a slit in the solid front.

"A regular cave, by hooky!" said the moral guide from Idaho, as he stood upright at last. His voice echoed strangely. "Hooky! hooky! hooky!" sounded from different points where the shadows deepened, suggesting endless additions to the room where they stood.

Genesee had halted and was splitting up some pine for a torch, using the knife Rachel had cut his bonds with, and showing that the handle was stained with blood, as were the sticks of pine he was handling.

"Look for some more sticks around here, and lend a hand," he said. "We need more than one torch. I burnt up what I had in working through that hole. I've been at it for three hours, I reckon, without knowing, till I got the last stone away, whether I'd be in time or find daylight on the other side."

"And is that what cut your hands?" asked Lieutenant Murray. "Why, they're a sight! For heaven's sake, what have you been doing?"

"I found a 'cave-in' of rock and gravel right at the end of that tunnel," answered Genesee, nodding the way they had just come, and drawing their notice to fresh earth and broken stone thrown to the side. "I had no tools here, nothing but them," and he motioned toward a mallet-like thing of stone. "My tools were moved from the mine over to Scot's Mountain awhile back, and as that truck had to be hoisted away, and I hadn't time to invite help, it had to be done with these;"

and he held out his hands that were bleeding—a telling witness of his endeavors to reach there in time. And every man of them felt it.

There was an impulsive move forward, and Hardy was the first to hold out his hand. But Genesee stepped back, leaning against the wall.

"That's all right, Hardy," he said, with something of his old careless smile. "I'm glad you're the first, for the sake of old times; but I reckon it would be playing it pretty low down on a friend to let him take me in on false pretenses. You see I haven't been acquitted of horse-stealing yet—about the most low-lived trade a man can turn to, unless it is sheep-stealing."

"Oh, h—l!" broke in one of the men, "this clears the horse business so far as I'm concerned, and I can bet on the other boys, too!"

"Can you?" asked Genesee, with a sort of elated, yet conservative, air; "but this isn't your game or the boys' game. I'm playing a lone hand, and not begging either. That torch ready?"

And the rebuff kept the others from any advance, if they had thought of making it. Lieutenant Murray had picked up the stone mallet and was examining it by the flickering light; one side was flattened a little, like a tomahawk.

"That's a queer affair," he remarked. "What did you have it made for?"

"*Have* it made! The chances are that thing was made before Columbus ever managed a sail-boat," returned Genesee. "I found a lot of them in here; wedges, too, and such."

"In here?" and the men looked with a new interest at the rocky walls. "What is it?"

"An extension I tumbled into, over a year back, when I was tunneling at a drift the other side of the hill. One day I found that hole there, and minded it this morning, so it came in handy. I reckon this is the original Tamahnous mine of the old tribe. It's been lost over a hundred years. The Kootenais only have a tradition of it."

"A mine—gold?"

"Well, I was digging for a silver show when I struck it," answered Genesee; "and, so far as I see, that's what was here, but it's worked out. Didn't do much prospecting in it, as I left the Kootenai hills less than a week after. I just filled up the entry, and allowed it would keep till I got back."

"Does it belong to you?" asked one man, with speculation in his voice.

Genesee laughed. "I reckon so. Tamahnous Peak is mine, and a few feet of grazing land on the east. Nobody grudges it to me up this way. Indians think it's haunted, 'cause all the rocks around it give echoes; and I—"

He ceased speaking abruptly, his eyes on the pile of debris in the corner. Then he lit a fresh torch from the dying one, and gave the word to strike for the outside, following single file, as the hill was pretty well honey-combed, and it was wise to be cautious.

"Because," said their leader, "if any should stray off, we might not have time this day of our Lord to come back and hunt him up."

Before leaving what seemed like the back entrance, he walked over to the corner and picked up the thing that had arrested his attention a minute before, and slipping it in his pocket, walked to the head of the

long line of men, several of whom were wounded, but only one less than the number who had left camp. And the one lacking was the man who had fired the first shot and killed the messenger from Grey Eagle —he himself dying from a wound, after the ride into the gulch.

As the scout passed the men, a hand and a pair of gloves were thrust out to him from a group; and turning his torch so that the light would show the giver, he saw it was Stuart.

"Thank you, sir," he said, with more graciousness than most of the men had ever seen in him; "I'll take them from you, as my own are damaged some." They were torn to shreds, and the fingers under them worn to the quick.

The echoing steps of the forty men were as if forty hundred were making their way through the mine of the Tamahnous; for no living tribe ever claimed it, even by descent. The hill that contained it had for generations been given by tradition to the witches of evil, who spoke through the rock—a clever scheme of those vanished workers to guard their wealth, or the wealth they hoped to find; but for what use? Neither silver in coin nor vessel can be traced as ever belonging to tribes of the Northern Indians. Yet that honey-combed peak, with its wide galleries, its many entries, and well-planned rooms, bespoke trained skill in underground quarrying. From some unseen source fresh air sifted through the darkness to them, and the tinkle of dripping water in pools came to their ears, though the pools were shrouded in the darkness that, just beyond the range of the few torches, was intense; and after the long tramp through echoing winds and turns, the misty dawn

that was still early seemed dazzling to the eyes, red and haggard from the vigil of the night.

"You will have to get away from here on a double-quick," said Genesee sharply, after a glance at the sky and up the sides of the hill from which they had come. "Once down there in the valley, the fog may hide you till sun-up, and then, again, it mightn't. Just mind that they have horses."

"We are not likely to forget it," was Captain Holt's answer; and then hesitated a moment, looking at Genesee.

"Are you not coming with us?" asked Lieutenant Murray, giving voice to the question in his commander's mind as well as the others.

"Yes, part of the way," said the scout quietly, but with a challenge to detention in the slight pause with which he glanced at the group; "but I have a beast to carry me back, and I'm just tired enough to use it." And disappearing for a minute in the brush, he led out Mowitza, and, mounting her, turned her head toward the terraces of the lower valley.

They passed the isolated cabin that brought back to Stuart a remembrance of where they were; then down the steps of the Tamahnous and along the little lake, all swathed alike in the snow and the mist, leaving null all character in the landscape.

The cabin was commented on by the men, to whom it was a surprise, looming up so close to them through the cloud curtain.

"That's mine," their guide remarked, and one of them, puzzled, stated it as his belief that Genesee claimed the whole Kootenai territory.

The scout gave up his saddle to a man with a leg-wound, but he did not let go the bridle of Mow-

itza; and so they went on with their guide stalking grimly ahead, ready, they all knew, to turn as fiercely against them at a sign of restraint as he had worked for them, if a movement was made to interfere with his further liberty.

The sun rolled up over the purple horizon—a great body of blushes suffusing the mountains; but its chaste entrance had brazened into a very steady stare before it could pierce the veil of the valleys, and pick out the dots of moving blue against the snow on the home trail.

It had been a wonderfully quiet tramp. Most of the thoughts of the party were of the man walking ahead of them, and his nearness made the discussion of his actions awkward. They did not know what to expect of him, and a general curiosity prevailed as to what he would do next.

They learned, when at last the ridge was reached above camp, about the middle of the forenoon. He had been talking some to the man on Mowitza, and when they reached that point he stopped.

"Whereabouts?" he asked; and the man pointed to a place where the snow was colored by soil.

"Over there! I guess the boys buried him."

"Well, you can get down from that saddle now. I reckon you can walk down to camp; if not, they can carry you." Then he turned to the rest.

"There's a body under that snow that I want," he said sententiously. "I'm not in condition for any more digging," and he glanced at his hands. "Are there any men among you that will get it out for me?"

"You bet!" was the unhesitating reply; and without question, hands and knives were turned to the task, the man on horseback watching them attentively.

"May I ask what that is for?" asked Captain Holt; at last, as amiably as he could, in the face of being ignored and affronted at every chance that was given Genesee. He had saved the commander's life; that was an easy thing to do compared with the possibility of hiding his contempt.

He was openly and even unreasonably aggressive—one of the spots in his nature that to a careless eye would appear the natural color of his whole character. He did not answer at once, and Captain Holt spoke again:

"What is the object of digging up that Indian?"

Then Genesee turned in the saddle.

"Just to give you all a little proof of how big a fool a man can be without being a 'permanent' in a lunatic asylum."

And then he turned his attention again to the men digging up the loose earth. They had not far to go; small care had been taken to make the grave deep.

"Take care there with your knives," said Genesee as one shoulder was bared to sight. "Lift him out. Here—give him to me."

"What in——"

"Give him to me!" he repeated. "I've given your ——fool lives back to forty of you, and all I'm asking for it is that Kootenai's dead body."

Stuart stooped and lifted the chill, dark thing, and other hands were quick to help. The frozen soil was brushed like dust from the frozen face, and then, heavy—heavy, it was laid in the arms of the man waiting for it.

He scanned from the young face to the moccasined feet swiftly, and then turned his eyes to the others.

"Where's his blanket?" he demanded; and a man who wore it pushed forward and threw it over the figure.

"Denny took it," he said in extenuation, "and when Denny went under, I took it."

"Yes!" and again his eyes swept the crowd. "Now I want his rifle, his knife, a snake-skin belt, and a necklace of bears' teeth—who's got them?"

"Well, I'll be——!" "How's that for second sight?" "Beats the devil out of ——!" were some of the sotto-voce remarks exchanged at the enumeration of the things wanted.

"I've no time to waste in waiting," he added. "If they're in this crowd and ain't given up, I'll straighten the account some day, if I have to hunt five years for the trail to them. I'm a-waiting."

His hand was laid on the breast of the dead Indian as he spoke, and something in the touch brought a change to his face. The hand was slipped quickly inside the fringed shirt, and withdrawn, clasping a roll of parchment cured in Indian fashion. A bitter oath broke from him as he untied the white sinews of the deer, and glanced at the contents.

"What is it? What is it?" was the question from all sides.

But Genesee, in a sort of fury, seemed to hear most clearly that of the, for the hour, displaced commander.

"I'll tell you what it is!" he burst out wrathfully. "It's a message of peace from the Kootenai tribe—an offer of their help against the Blackfeet any time the troops of the United States need them. It is sent by Grey Eagle, the oldest of their war chiefs, and the messenger sent was Grey Eagle's grandson, Snowcap —the future chief of their people. And you have had him shot down like a dog while carrying that message. By ——! I wouldn't have blamed them if they had scalped every mother's son of you."

To say that the revelation was impressive, would express the emotions of the men but mildly. Captain Holt was not the only one of them who turned white at the realization of what a provoked uprising of those joint tribes would mean, in the crippled condition of the camp. It would mean a sweeping annihilation of all white blood in their path; the troops would have enough to do to defend themselves, without being able to help the settlers.

"In God's name, Genesee, is this true?" and forgetting all animosity in the overwhelming news, Holt pressed forward, laying his hand on the shoulder of the dead messenger.

"Take it off!" yelled Genesee, looking at the unconscious hand that involuntarily had moved toward him. "Take it off, or, by ——, I'll cut it off!"

And his fingers closing nervously on the hunting-knife emphasized his meaning, and showed how stubborn and sleepless were the man's prejudices.

The hand dropped, and Genesee reached out the document to one of the crestfallen scouts.

"Just read that out loud for the benefit of anyone that can't understand my way of talking," he suggested with ironical bitterness; "and while you are about it, the fellows that stripped this boy will be good enough to ante up with everything they've got of his—and no time to waste about it, either."

And Captain Holt, with a new idea of the seriousness of the demand, seconded it, receiving with his own hands the arms and decorations that had been seized by the victorious Denny, and afterward divided among his comrades. Genesee noted that rendering up of trifling spoils with sullen eyes, in which the fury had not abated a particle.

"A healthy crew you are!" he remarked contemptuously; "a nice, clean-handed lot, without grit enough to steal a horse, but plenty of it for robbing a dead boy. I reckon no one of you ever had a boy that age of your own."

And several of them—looking in the dark, dead face—felt uneasy, and forgot for the moment that they were lectured by a horse-thief; forgot even how light a thing the life of an Indian was anyway.

"Don't blame the whole squad," said the man who took the articles from the Captain and handed them up to Genesee. "Denny captured them when he made the shot, just as anyone would do, and it's no use cussin' about Denny; he's buried up in that gulch—the Kootenais finished him."

"And saved me the trouble," added the scout significantly.

He was wrapping as well as he could the gay blanket over the rigid form. The necklace was clasped about the throat, but the belt was more awkward to manage, and was thrust into the bosom of Genesee's buckskin shirt, the knife in his belt, the rifle swung at his back.

There was something impressively ghastly in those two figures—the live one with the stubbornness of fate, and the stolidity, sitting there, with across his thighs the blanketed, shapeless thing that had held a life; and even the husk seemed a little more horrible with its face hidden than when revealed more frankly; there was something so weirdly suggestive in the moveless outlines.

"No, I don't want that," he said, as the man who read the message was about to hand it back to him; "it belongs to the command, and I may get a dose of cold lead before I could deliver it."

Then he glanced about, signaling Stuart by a motion of his head.

"There's a lady across in the valley there that I treated pretty badly last night," he said, in a tone so natural that all near could hear him, and more than one head was raised in angry question. "She was just good enough to ride over from the ranch to bring a letter to me—hearing I was locked up for a horse-thief, and couldn't go after it. Well, as I tell you, I was just mean enough to treat her pretty bad—flung her on the floor when she tried to stop me, and then nabbed the beast she rode to camp on—happened to be my own; but may be she won't feel so bad if you just tell her what the nag was used for; and may be that will show her I didn't take the trail for fun."

"That" was one of the gloves he had worn from his hands with his night's work, and there were stains on it darker than those made with earth.

"I'll tell her;" and then an impulsive honesty of feeling made him add: "You need never fear her judgment of you, Jack."

The two looked a moment in each other's eyes, and the older man spoke.

"I've been hard on you," he said deliberately, "d—d hard; all at once I've seen it, and all the time you've been thinking a heap better of me than I deserved. I know it now, but it's about over. I won't stand in your way much longer; wait till I come back—"

"You are coming back? and where are you going?" The questions, a tone louder than they had used, were heard by the others around. Genesee noted the listening look on the faces, and his words were answers to them as much as to the questioner.

"I'm going to take the trail for the Kootenai village;

if any white man is let reach it, or patch up the infernal blunder that's been made, I can do it with him," and his hand lay on the breast of the shrouded thing before him.

"If I get out of it alive, I'll be back to meet the Major; if I don't"—and this time his significant glance was turned unmistakably to the blue coats and their leader—"and if I don't, you'd better pack your carcasses out of this Kootenai valley, and h—l go with you."

And so, with a curse for them on his lips, and the dogged determination to save them in his heart, he nodded to Hardy, clasped the hand of Stuart, and turning Mowitza's head, started with that horrible burden back over the trail that would take a day and a night to cover.

The men were grateful for the bravery that had saved their lives, but burned under the brutal taunts that had spared nothing of their feelings. His execrable temper had belittled his own generosity.

He was a squaw man, but they had listened in silence, and ashamed, when he had presumed to censure them. He was a horse-thief, yet the men who believed it watched, with few words, the figure disappear slowly along the trail, with no thought of checking him.

CHAPTER V.

HIS WIFE'S LETTER.

In the bosom of Rachel's family strange thoughts had been aroused by that story of Genesee's escape. They were wonderfully sparing of their comments in her presence; for, when the story came to her of what he had done when he left her, she laughed.

"Yet he is a horse-thief," she said, in that tone of depreciation that expresses praise, "and he sent me his glove? Well, I am glad he had the grace to be sorry for scattering me over the floor like that. And we owe it to him that we see you here alive again? We can appreciate his bravery, even say prayers for him, if the man would only keep out of sight; but we couldn't ask him to a dinner party, supposing we gave dinner parties, could we, Tillie?"

And Tillie, who had impulsively said "God bless him!" from the shelter of her husband's arms, collapsed, conscience-stricken and tearful.

"You have a horrid way, Rachel, of making people feel badly," she said, in the midst of her thankfulness and remorse; "but wait until I see him again—I will let him know how much we can appreciate such courage as that. Just wait until he comes back!"

"Yes," said the girl, with all the irony gone from her voice, only the dreariness remaining, "I'm waiting."

And the words started Tillie to crying afresh; for, in the recesses of her own bosom, another secret of Genesee's generosity was hidden for prudential

motives—the fact that it was he who had sent the guide for Rachel that terrible night of the snow. And Tillie was not a good keeper of secrets—even this thoroughly wise one was hard to retain, in her gladness at having her husband back!

"The man seems a sort of shepherd of everything that gets astray in these hills," said Lieutenant Murray, who was kindly disposed toward all creation because of an emotional, unsoldierlike welcome that had been given him by the little non-commissioned officer in petticoats. "He first led us out of that corral in the hills and brought us back where we belonged, and then dug up that dead Indian and started to take him where he belonged. I tell you there was a sort of—of sublimity in the man as he sat there with that horrible load he was to carry, that is, there would have been if he hadn't 'cussed' so much."

"Does he swear?" queried Fred.

"Does he? My child, you would have a finely-trained imagination if you could conceive the variety of expressions by which he can consign a citizen to the winter resort from which all good citizens keep free. His profanity, they say, is only equaled by his immorality. But, ah—what a soldier he would make! He is the sort of a man that men would walk right up to cannon with—even if they detested him personally."

"And a man needs no fine attributes or high morality to wield that sort of influence, does he?" asked Rachel, and walked deliberately away before any reply could be made.

But she was no more confident than they of his unimpeachable worth. There was the horse-thieving still unexplained; he had not even denied it to her. And she

came to the conclusion that she herself was sadly lacking in the material for orthodox womanhood, since the more proof she had of his faults, the more solidly she took her position for his defense. It had in it something of the same blind stubbornness that governed his likes and dislikes, and that very similarity might have accounted for the sort of understanding that had so long existed between them. And she had more than the horse-stealing to puzzle over. She had that letter he had thrust in her hand and told her to read; such a pleading letter, filled with the heart-sickness of a lonely woman. She took it out and re-read it that time when she walked away from their comments; and reading over the lines, and trying to read between them, she was sorely puzzled:

"DEAR JACK: I wrote you of my illness weeks ago, but the letter must have been lost, or else your answer, for I have not heard a word from you, and I have wanted it more than I can tell you. I am better, and our little Jack has taken such good care of me. He is so helpful, so gentle; and do you know, dear, he grows to look more like you every day. Does that seem strange? He does not resemble me in the least. You will think me very exacting, I suppose, when I tell you that such a child, and such a home as you have given me, does not suffice for my content. I know you will think me ungrateful, but I must speak of it to you. I wrote you before, but no answer has come. If I get none to this, I will go to find you—if I am strong enough. If I am not, I shall send Jack. He is so manly and strong, I know he could go. I will know then, at least, if you are living. I feel as if I am confessing a fault to you when I tell you I have heard from *him* at last—and more, that I was so glad to hear!

"Jack—dear Jack—he has never forgotten. He is free now; would marry me yet if it were possible. Write to me—tell me if it can ever be. I know how weak you will think me. Perhaps my late ill-health has made me more so; but I am hungry for the sound of the dear voice, and I am so alone since your father died. You will never come back; and you know, Jack, how loneliness always was so dreadful to me—even our boy is not enough. He does not understand. Come back, or write to me. Let my boy know his father, or else show me how to be patient; this silence is so terrible to YOUR WIFE.

"Jack, what a mockery that word looks—yet I am grateful."

And this was the letter he had told her to read and give to Stuart, if he never returned; but she gave it to no one. She mentioned it to no one, only waited to see if he ever came back, and with each reading of that other woman's longings, there grew stronger in her the determination that his life belonged to the writer of that letter and her child—her boy, who looked like him. Surely there was a home and an affection that should cure him of this wild, semi-civilized life he was leading. She was slipping away that almighty need he had shown of herself. She grimly determined that all remembrance of it had got to be put aside; it was such an unheard-of, reasonless sort of an attraction anyway, and if she really had any influence over him, it should be used to make him answer that letter as it should be answered, and straighten out the strange puzzles in it. All this she determined she would tell him—when he got back.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE HEIGHTS.

And while they commented, and wondered, and praised, and found fault with him, the day drifted into darkness, the darkness into a dreary dawn; and through all changes of the hours the outlaw stalked, with sometimes his ghastly companion bound to the saddle, and then again he would remount, holding Snowcap in his arms—but seldom halting, never wavering; and Mowitza, who seemed more than ever a familiar spirit, forged ahead as if ignoring the fact of hunger and scanty herbage to be found, her sturdy persistence suggesting a realization of her own importance.

A broad trail was left for them, one showing that the detachment of braves and the horses of the troops had returned under forced march to bear the news to their village—and such news!

The man's dark face hardened and more than one of those expressive maledictions broke from him as he thought over it. All his sympathies were with them. For five years they had been as brethren to him; never had any act of treachery touched him through them. To their people he was not Genesee the outcast, the immoral, the suspected. He was Lamonti—of the mountains—like their own blood.

He was held wise in their councils, and his advice had weight.

He could have ruled their chief, and so their nation, had he been ambitious for such control.

He was their adopted son, and had never presumed on

their liking, though he knew there was little in their slender power that would not have been his had he desired it.

And now he knew he would be held their enemy. His influence had encouraged that sending of the message and the offered braves to the commander of the troops. Would they grant him a hearing now? or would they shoot him down, as the soldier had shot Snowcap, with his message undelivered?

And those questions, and the retrospection back of them, were with him as he went upward into the mountains to the north.

Another night was falling slowly, and the jewels of the far skies one by one slipped from their ether casket, and shone with impressive serenity on the crusted snow. Along the last ridge Mowitza bore for the last time her double burden. There was but a slope to descend, a sheltered cove to reach, and Snowcap would be given back to his kindred.

The glittering surface of the white carpet warmed into reflected lights as the moon, a soft-footed, immature virgin, stole after the stars and let her gleams be wooed and enmeshed in the receptive arms of the whispering pine. Not a sound broke through the peace of the heights. In their sublime isolation, they lift souls as well as bodies above the commonplace, and the rider, the stubborn keeper of so many of their secrets, threw back his head with a strange smile in his eyes as the last summit was reached—and reached in the light of peace. Was it an omen of good? He thought of that girl back in the valley who was willing to share this life of the hills with him. All things beautiful made him think of her, and the moon-kissed night was grand, up there above

where men lived. He thought of her superb faith, not in what he was, but in what her woman's instinct told her it was possible for him to be. What a universe of loves in human hearts revolve about those unseen, unproven substances!

He thought of the time when she had lain in his arms as Snowcap was lying, and he had carried her over the hills in the moonlight. He was bitterly cold, but through the icy air there came the thrill and flush of that long-past temptation. He wondered what she would say when they told her how he had used his freedom. The conviction of her approval gave again that strange smile of elation to his eyes; and the cold and hunger were ignored, and his fatigue fell from him. And with the tenderness that one gives to a sleeping child, he adjusted with his wounded hands the blanket that slipped from the dead boy, raising one of the rigid arms the better to shroud it in the gay colors.

And then the peace of the heights was broken by a sharp report; the whiteness of the moonlight was crossed by the quick, red flash of death, and Mowitza stopped still in her tracks, while her master, with that dead thing clasped close in his arms, lunged forward on her neck.

CHAPTER VII.

A REBEL.

Within the confines of Camp Kootenai there was a ripple of rejoicing. At last, after four days lost because of the snow, Major Dreyer had arrived, pushing on with all possible haste after meeting the runner—and, to the bewilderment of all, he rode into camp on one of the horses stolen almost a week ago.

"No mystery about it—only a little luck," he said in explanation. "I found him at Holland's as I came up. A white man belonging to the Blackfeet rode him in there several nights ago. The white man got drunk, picked a row, and got his pay for it. They gave him grave-room down there, and in the morning discovered that the beast had our brand, so gave him up to us as we came through."

Needless to say that this account was listened to with unusual interest. A man belonging to the Blackfeet! That proved Genesee's theory of which he had spoken to Captain Holt—the theory that was so thoroughly discredited.

When word was brought that the Major's party had been sighted from the south, Fred and Rachel could hardly wait for the saddles to be thrown on the horses.

Tillie caught the fever of impatience, and rode down beside Hardy. Stuart was not about. The days since Genesee's departure he had put in almost entirely with the scouts stationed to note any approach from the north; he was waiting for that coming back. Kalitan, for the first time since

Genesee's flight, came into camp. The man who had seemed the friend of his friend was again in command; and he showed his appreciation of the difference by presenting himself in person beside Rachel, to whom he had allied himself in a way that was curious to the rest, and was so devotionally serious to himself.

"Then, perhaps it was not that Genesee who stole the horses, after all," broke in Fred, as her father told the story.

"Genesee!—nonsense!" said the Major brusquely. "We must look into that affair at once," and he glanced at the Captain; "but if that man's a horse-thief, I've made a big mistake—and I won't believe it until I have proof."

As yet there had been no attempt at any investigation of affairs, only an informal welcoming group, and Fred, anxious to tell a story that she thought astonishing, recounted breathlessly the saving of the men by way of the mine, and of the gloves and the hands worn in that night's work, and last, of the digging up of that body and carrying it away to the mountains.

Her father, at first inclined to check her voluble recital that would come to him in a more official form, refrained, as the practical array of facts showing through her admiration summed themselves up in a mass that echoed his convictions.

"And that is the man suspected of stealing a few horses? Good God! what proof have you that will weigh against courage like that?"

"Major, he scarcely denied it," said the Captain, in extenuation of their suspicions. "He swore the Kootenais did not do it, and that's all he would say.

He was absent all the afternoon and all the night of the thievery, and refused to give any account whatever of his absence, even when I tried to impress him with the seriousness of the situation. The man's reputation, added to his suspicious absence, left me but one thing to do—I put him under guard."

"That does look strange," agreed the Major, with a troubled face; "refused—"

He was interrupted by a sound from Rachel, who had not spoken after the conversation turned to Genesee. But now she came forward with a low cry, trembling and passionate, doubt and hope blending in her face.

"Did you say the *night* the horses were stolen?" she demanded. All looked at her wonderingly, and Kalitan instinctively slid a little nearer.

"Yes, it was in the night," answered the Captain, "about two o'clock; but you surely knew about it?"

"I? I knew nothing," she burst out furiously; "they lied to me—all of you. You told me it was in the morning. How dared you—how dared you do it?"

The Major laid a restraining hand on her arm; he could feel that she was trembling violently. She had kept so contemptuously cool through all those days of doubt, but she was cool no longer; her face was white, but it looked a white fury.

"What matter about the hour, Miss Rachel?" asked the commander; and she shook off his hand and stepped back beside Kalitan, as if putting herself where Genesee had put himself—with the Indians.

"Because I could have told where Jack Genesee was that night, if they had not deceived me. He was with me."

Tillie gave a little cry of wonder and contrition. She saw it all now.

"But—but you said it was a Kootenai who brought you home," she protested feebly; "you told us Lamonti."

"He is a Kootenai by adoption, and he is called Lamonti," said the girl defiantly; "and the night those horses were run off, he was with me from an hour after sundown until four o'clock in the morning."

That bold statement had a damaging ring to it—unnecessarily so; and the group about her, and the officers and men back of them, looked at her curiously.

"Then, since you can tell this much in his favor, can you tell why he himself refused to answer so simple a question?" asked Major Dreyer kindly.

That staggered her for a moment, as she put her hand up in a helpless way over her eyes, thinking—thinking fast. She realized now what it meant, the silence that was for her sake—the silence that was not broken even to her. And a mighty remorse arose for her doubt—the doubt she had let him see; yet he had not spoken! She raised her eyes and met the curious glances of the men, and that decided her. They were the men who had from the first condemned him—been jealous of the commander's trust.

"Yes, I think I can tell you that, too," she said frankly. "The man is my friend. I was lost in the snow that night; he found me, and it took us all night to get home. He knows how these people think of him;" and her eyes spared none. "They have made him feel that he is an outcast among them. They have made him feel that a friendship or companionship with him is a discredit to any woman—oh, I know! They think so now, in spite of what he has done for them. He knows that. He is very generous, and wanted, I suppose, to spare me; and I—I was vile enough to doubt him," she burst out. "Even when I brought him his

horse, I half believed the lies about him, and he knew it, and never said a word—not one word."

"When you brought him his horse?" asked the Major, looking at her keenly, though not unkindly.

And her remorse found a new vent in the bravado with which she looked at them all and laughed.

"Yes," she said defiantly, as if there was a certain comfort in braving their displeasure, and proving her rebellion to their laws; "yes, I brought him his horse—not by accident either! I brought him brandy and provisions; I brought him revolvers and ammunition. I helped him to escape, and I cut the bonds your guards had fastened him with. Now, what are you going to do about it?"

Tillie gasped with horror. She did not quite know whether they would shoot her as a traitor, or only imprison her; but she knew military law could be a very dreadful thing, and her fears were extravagant.

As for Miss Fred, her eyes were sparkling. With the quick deductions of her kind, she reasoned that, without the escape that night, the men would have died in that trap in the hills, and a certain delicious meeting and its consequences—of which she was waiting to tell the Major,—would never have been hers. And her feelings were very frankly expressed, as she stepped across to the self-isolated rebel and kissed her.

"You're a darling—and a plucky girl," she said warmly; "and you never looked so pretty in your life."

But the defiant face did not relax, even at that intelligence. Her eyes were on the commander, her judge. And he was looking with decided interest at her.

"Yours is a very grave offense, Miss Rachel," he said, with deliberation that struck added terrors to Tillie's heart. "The penalty of contriving the escape of prisoners is one I do not like to mention to you; but since the man in this case was innocent, and I take your evidence in proof—well, that might be some extenuation of the act."

"I didn't know he was innocent when I helped him," she broke in; "I thought the horses were stolen after he left me."

"That makes it more serious, certainly;" but his eyes were not at all serious. "And since you seem determined to allow nothing in extenuation of your own actions, I can only say that—that I value very highly the forty men whose lives were saved to us by that escape; and when I see Mr. Genesee, I will thank him in the warmest way at my command;" and he held out his hand to the very erect, very defiant rebel.

She could scarcely believe it when she heard the words of praise about her; when one man after another of that rescued crowd came forward to shake hands with her—and Hardy almost lifted her off her feet to kiss her. "By George! I'm proud of you, Rachel," he said impulsively. "You are plucky enough to—to be Genesee himself."

But the praise seemed a very little thing to her. Her bravado was over; she felt as if she must cry if they did not leave her alone. Of what use were words, if he should never come back—never know that he was cleared of suspicion? If they had so many kind words now, why had they not found some for him when he needed them? She did not know the uncompromising surliness that made him so difficult of approach to many people, especially any who showed

their own feeling of superiority, as most of them did, to a squaw man.

She heard that term from the Major, a moment after he had shaken hands with her. He had asked what were the other suspicions mentioned against Genesee; she could not hear the answer—they had moved a little apart from her—but she could hear the impatience with which he broke in on their speech.

"A squaw man!—well, what if he is?" he asked, with a serene indifference to the social side of the question. "What difference does it make whether the man's wife has been red, or white, or black, so long as she suited him? There are two classes of squaw men, as there are of other men on the frontier—the renegades and the usual percentage of honest and dishonest citizens. You've all apparently been only willing to understand the renegades. I've been along the border for thirty years, and some of the bravest white men I've ever seen had Indian wives. Some of the men whose assistance in Indian wars has been invaluable to us are ranchmen whose children are half-breeds, and who have taught their squaws housework and English at the same time, and made them a credit to any nation. There's a heap of uncalled-for prejudice against a certain class of those men; and, so far as I've noticed, the sneak who abandons his wife and children back in the States, or borrows the wife of someone else to make the trip out here with, is the specimen that is first to curl his lip at the squaw man. That girl over there strikes me as showing more common sense than the whole community; she gave him the valuation of a man."

The Major's blood was up. It was seldom that he made so long a speech; but the question was one

against which he had clashed often, and to find the old prejudice was so strong a motor in the disorganizing of an outpost was enraging.

"And do you realize what that man did when he took that trail north?" he demanded impressively. "He knew that he carried his life in his hand as sure as he carried that body. And he went up there to play it against big odds for the sake of a lot of people who had a contemptible contempt for him."

"And cursed us soundly while he did it," added one of the men, in an aside; but the Major overheard it.

"Yes, that's like him, too," he agreed. "But, if any of you can show me so great a courage and conscientiousness in a more refined citizen, I'm waiting to see it."

And then there was the quick fall of hoofs outside the shack, hurried questions and brief answers. And one of the scouts from the north ridge hurried in and reported to Major Dreyer.

"A gang o' hostiles are in sight—not many; they've got our horses. Think they carry a flag o' truce, but couldn't spot it for sure. They're not a fighten' gang, any way, fur they're comen' slow and carryen' somethen'."

"A flag of truce? That means peace. Thank God!" said Tillie, fervently.

"And Genesee," added the Major.

As for Rachel, her heart seemed in her throat. She tried to speak, to rush out and learn their message. But she could not move. An awful presentiment bound her. "Carrying something!"

CHAPTER VIII.

"WHEN THE SUN GOETH DOWN."

"Opitsah!—Klahowya."

They brought him—his dark, sad-faced brothers—bearing him on a bed of elastic poles and the skins of beasts; and walking through the lines of blue-coats as if not seeing them, they laid him on the floor of the shack, and grouped themselves clannishly in one corner, near his head. Stuart knelt with trembling hands to examine the cruel wound in the throat, and turned away, shaking his head. He could not speak. There was a slow, inward hemorrhage. He was bleeding to death.

"Determination has kept him alive," decided the Major, when the spokesman of the Kootenais told of the shot on the mountain, and how they had to carry him, with Snowcap in his arms, to the wigwam of Grey Eagle; of the council through which he kept up, and then told them he would live until he reached camp—he was so sure of it! And for the body of Snowcap he had asked the horses left in the gulch, and was given them—and much more, because of the sorrow of their nation. He did not try to speak at first, only looked about, drinking in the strange kindness in all the faces; and then reached out his hand toward Rachel.

"*Opitsah!*" he whispered, with that smile of triumph in his eyes. "I told you I'd live—till I got back to you;" and then his eyes turned to the Major. "I got a stand-off on the hostilities—till your return—inside.

my coat—I wrote it." He ceased, gasping, while they drew out the "talking-paper" with the mark of Grey Eagle at the foot, and on it also were there murderous stains.

"You—treat with them now," he continued, "but—be careful. Don't shirk promises. They're easy managed now—like a lot of children, just because they shot me—when I was carrying Snowcap home. But they'll get over—that, and then—be careful. They were ready for the war-path—when I got there."

He saw Captain Holt not far from him, and through the pallor of his face a faint flush crept.

"Well, I've come back for my trial," he scowled, with something of his old defiance; and the Major knelt down and took his hand.

"That's all over, Genesee," he said gently. "It was a big mistake. There is not a soul here with anything but gratitude and admiration for you. It was your own fault you were suspected; Miss Rachel has explained. Why did you not?"

He did not answer—only looked at her, and seemed gathering his strength for some final effort.

"I want someone—to write."

He was still holding Rachel's hand. She had not said a word; only her eyes seemed to tell him enough.

Stuart came forward. "Will I do, Jack?"

Jack nodded, and more than one was astonished at the signs of grief in Stuart's face. Rachel was past speculation.

"This lady, here," said Genesee, motioning to her, "has done a heap for me—more than she knows—I reckon—and I want—to square things."

Rachel attempted to speak; but he raised his hand.

"Don't," he whispered. "Let me say it—*tillikum.*"

Then he turned to Stuart. "There's a bit of ground up in the hills; it's mine, and I want her to have it—it's Tamahnous Hill—and the old mine—write it."

She thought of that other woman, and tried to protest. But again he saw it, and pressed her hand for silence.

"I want her to have it—for she likes these hills, and—she's been mighty good to me. No one will interfere—with her claim—I reckon."

"No one shall interfere," said Stuart, toward whom he looked. Genesee smiled.

"That's right—that's all right. She won't be afraid of the—witches. And she'll tell you where I want to go—she knows." His voice was growing fainter; they could see he was almost done with the Kootenai valley.

"In my pocket is something—from the mine," he said, looking at Rachel; "it will show you—and there's another will in the bank—at Holland's—it is—for Annie."

Stuart guided his hand for the signature to the paper. Stuart wrote his own, and Hardy followed, his eyes opening in wonder at something written there.

A slight rustle in the group at the door drew the Major's attention, and a young face coming forward made him turn to Stuart.

"I had altogether forgotten that I brought someone from Holland's for you—a boy sent there to find J. S. Stuart. I knew it must be C. S. Stuart, though, and brought him along."

A dark-faced little fellow, with a sturdy, bright look, walked forward at the commander's motion. But his wondering gaze was on the man lying there with such an eager look in his eyes.

"This is Mr. Stuart," said the Major, and then turned to Genesee.

The Stuart's face was white as the wounded man's as the boy looked up at him, frankly.

"I'm—I'm Jack," he said; "and mamma sent a letter."

The letter was held out, and the boy's plucky mouth trembled a little at the lack of welcome; not even a hand-shake, and he was such a little fellow—about ten. But Stuart looked like a man who sees a ghost. He took the letter, after a pause that seemed very long to the people who watched his strange manner. Then he looked at the envelope, took the boy by the arm, and thrusting the Major blindly aside, he knelt by Genesee.

"This is for you, Jack," he said, motioning the others back by a gesture—all but Rachel—that hand-clasp was so strong! "and your namesake has brought it."

"Read it," and he motioned Rachel to take it; "read me Annie's letter."

She read it lowly—a repetition of that other plea that Jack had left with her, and its finale the same longing request that her boy should at last be let know his father. Stuart was in tears when she finished.

"Jack," he said, "ten years is a long time; I've suffered every hour of them. Give me the boy; let me know you are agreed at last. Give Annie back to me!"

Jack raised his hand to the bewildered boy, who took it reverently.

"You are Annie's boy?" he whispered; "kiss me for her—tell her—" And then his eyes sought Stuart's—"I held them in pawn for you. I reckon you're earnest

enough now—to redeem them. What was that verse about—giving back the pledge when—the sun goes down? You read it. Mother used to read it—little mother! She will be glad, I reckon—she—"

Stuart was sobbing outright, with his arms about the boy. Rachel, with the letter in her hand, was as puzzled as those who had drawn out of hearing. Only the Indians stood close and impassive. Jack meeting her eyes, smiled.

"You know now—all about—them—and Annie. That was why I tried—to keep away from you—you know now."

But she did not know.

"You took his wife from him?" she said, in a maze of conflicting revelations; and Jack looked at Stuart, as she added, "and who were you?"

"He is my brother!" said Stuart, in answer to that look of Jack's. "He would not let me say it before—not for years. But he is my brother!"

The words were loud enough for all to hear, and there was a low chorus of surprise among the group. But all concealment was about over for Genesee—even the concealment of death.

And then Stuart looked across at Rachel. He heard that speech, "You took his wife from him;" and he asked no leave of Jack to speak now.

"Don't think that of him," he said, steadily. "You have been the only one who has, blindfolded, judged him aright. Don't fail him now. He is worth all the belief you had in him. The story I read you that night was true. His was the manhood you admired in it; mine, the one you condemned. As I look back on our lives now, his seems to me one immense sacrifice—and no compensations—one terri-

ble isolation; and now—now everything comes to him too late!"

"He is—sorry," whispered Genesee, "and talks wild—but—you know now?"

"Yes," and the girl's face had something of the solemn elation of his own. "Yes, I know now."

"And—you will live in the hills—may be?—not so very far away from—me. In my pocket—is something—from the mine—Davy will tell you. Be good to—my Kootenais; they think—a heap of you. Kalitan!"

The Arrow came forward, and shook reverently the hand of the man who had been master to him. The eyes roved about the room, as if in search of others unseen. Rachel guessed what was wanted, and motioned to the Indians.

"Come; your brother wants you," she said. And as they grouped about him and about her, they barred out the soldiers and civilians—the white brother and child—barred out all from him save his friends of the mountains and the wild places—the haunts of exiles. And the girl, as one by one they touched her hand at his request, and circled her with their dark forms, seemed to belong to them too.

"When the—snow melts—the flowers are on that ledge," he whispered with his eyes closed, "and the birds—not echoes—the echoes are in the mine—don't be—afraid. I'll go along—and Mowitza."

He was silent for so long that she stooped and whispered to him of prayer. He opened his eyes and smiled at her.

"Give me—your good wishes—and kiss me, and I'll—risk hell," was the characteristic answer given so low that she had to watch closely the lips she kissed.

"And you've kissed me—again! Who said—no compensation?—they—don't know; we know—and the moonlight, and—yes—mother knows; she thought, at last—I was not—all bad; not all—little mother! And now—don't be afraid; I won't go—far—*klahowya,* my girl—my girl!"

And then one Indian from the circle unslung his rifle from his shoulder and shattered it with one blow of an axe by the fire. The useless thing was laid beside what had been Genesee. And the owner, shrouding his head in his blanket, sat apart from the rest. It was he of the bear claws; the sworn friend of Lamonti, and the man who had shot him.

* * * * * * *

At sunset he was laid to rest in the little plateau on Scot's Mountain that faces the west. He was borne there by the Indians, who buried in his grave the tomahawk they had resurrected for the whites of Camp Kootenai. Mowitza, rebelliously impatient, was led riderless by Kalitan. All military honors were paid him who had received no honors in life, the rites ending by that volley of sound that seals the grave of a soldier.

And then the pale-faces turned again to the south, and the dark-faces took the trail to the north, and the sun with a last flickering blaze flooded the snow with crimson, and died behind the western peaks they had watched light up one morning.

CHAPTER IX.

"RASHELL OF LAMONTI."

The echoes are no longer silent in Tamahnous Peak. The witchcraft of silver has killed the old superstition. The "something" in Genesee's pocket had been a specimen that warranted investigation. The lost tribe had left enough ore there through the darkness of generations to make mining a thing profitable. Above those terraces of unknown origin there is a dwelling-house now, built of that same bewitched stone in which the echoes sleep; and often there is gathered under its roof a strange household.

The words of Genesee, "Be good to my Kootenais!" have so far been remembered by the girl who during the last year of his life filled his thoughts so greatly. His friends are her friends, and medley as the lot would appear to others, they are welcome to her. They have helped her solve a problem of what use she could make of her life. Her relatives have given up in despair trying to alter her unheard-of manner of living. An idea is prevalent among them that Rachel's mind, on some subjects, is really queer—she was always so erratic! They speak to her of the loneliness of those heights, and she laughs at them. She is never lonely. She had his word that he would not go far. With her lives old Davy MacDougall, who helps her much in the mining matters, and Kalitan is never far off. He is her shadow now, as he once was Genesee's. Indian women do the work of her home.

A school is there for any who care to learn, and in the lodges of the Kootenais she is never forgotten.

It seemed strange that he who had so few friends in his life should win her so many by his death. The Indians speak of him now with a sort of awe, as their white brother whose counsels were so wise, whose courage was so great; he who forced from the spirits the secret of the lost mine. He has drifted into tradition as some wonderful creature who was among them for a while, disappearing at times, but always coming back at a time of their need.

To Rachel they turn as to something which they must guard—for he said so. She is to them always "Rashell of Lamonti"—of the mountains.

From the East and South come friends sometimes —letters and faces of people who knew him; Miss Fred and her husband, and the Major, who is a stanch friend and admirer of the eccentric girl who was once a rebel in his camp; and in reminiscences the roughness of his Kootenai chief of scouts is swathed in the gray veil of the past—only the lightning-flashes of courage are photographed in the veteran's memory.

And the Stuart and his wife and boy come there sometimes in the summer; and the girl and little Jack, who are very fond of each other, ride over the places where the other Jack Stuart rode—nameless for so long.

As for Prince Charlie, his natural affection for children amounts to adoration of the boy. Rachel wonders sometimes if the ideal his remorse had fostered for so long was filled at last by the girl whom he had left a delicately tinted apple-blossom and found a delicate type of the invalid, whose ill-health never exceeds fashionable indisposition. If not, no word or sign from him shows it. The pretty, ideal phases of

domestic love and life that he used to write of, are not so ready to his pen as they once were through his dreams and remorse. Much changed for him in those northern hills, and they have still a fascination for him. He writes of them a good deal.

"It is the witchcraft of the place, or else it is you, Rachel," he said, once. "Both help me. When life grows old and stale in civilization, I come up here and am straightway young again. I can understand now how you helped Jack."

His wife—a pretty little woman with a gently appealing air—never understands Rachel much, though she and Tillie are great friends; but, despite Tillie's praise, Annie never can discover what there is in the girl for "Charlie and all the other men to like so much—and even poor, dear Jack, who must have been in love with her to leave her a silver mine." To Annie she seems rather clever, but with so little affection! and not even sympathetic, as most girls are. She heard of Rachel's pluck and bravery; but that is so near to boldness!—as heroes are to adventurers; and Annie is a very prim little woman herself. She quotes "my husband" a good deal, and rates his work with the first writers of the age.

And the work has grown earnest; the lessons of Rachel's prophecy have crept into it. He has in so many ways justified them—achieved more than he hoped; but he never will write anything more fascinating than the changeless youth in his own eyes, or the serious tenderness of his own mouth when he smiles.

"Prince Charlie is a rare, fine lad," old Davy remarked at the end of an autumn, as he and Rachel watched their visitors out of sight down the valley; "a

man fine enough to be brother to Genesee, an' I ne'er was wearied o' him till I hearkened to that timorous fine lady o' his lilting him into the chorus o' every song she sung. By her tellen' she's the first o' the wives that's ever had a husband."

"But she is not a fine lady at all," contradicted Rachel; "and she's a very affectionate, very good little woman. You are set against her because of that story of long ago—and that is hardly fair, Davy MacDougall."

"Well, then, I am not, lass. It's little call I have to judge children, but I own I'm ower cranky when I think o' the waste o' a man's life for a bit pigeon like that—an' a man like my lad was! The prize was no' worth the candle that give light to it. A man's life is a big thing to throw away, lass, an' I see nothing in that bit o' daintiness to warrant it. To me it's a woeful waste."

The girl walked on beside him through the fresh, sweet air of the morning that was filled with crisp kisses—the kisses that warn the wild things of the Frost-King's coming. She was separated so slightly from the wild things herself that she was growing to understand them in a new spirit—through a sympathy touched less by curiosity than of old. She thought of that man who slept across on Scot's Mountain, in sight of Tamahnous Peak; how he had understood them!—not through the head, but the heart. Through some reflected light of feeling she had lived those last days of his life at a height above her former level. She had seen in the social outlaw who loved her a soul that, woman-like, she placed above where she knelt. Perhaps it had been the uncivilized heroism, perhaps the unselfish, deliberate sacrifice, appealing

to a hero-worshiper. But something finer in nature than she had ever been touched by in a more civilized life had come to her through him in those last days—not through the man as men knew him, and not through the love he had borne her—but through the spirit she thought she saw there.

It may have been in part an illusion—women have so many—but it was strong in her. It raised her life up to touch the thing she had placed on the heights, and something of the elation that had come to him through that last sacrifice filled her, and forbade her return into the narrowed valleys of existence.

His wasted life! It had been given at last to the wild places he loved. It had left its mark on the humanity of them, and the mark had not been a mean one. The girl, thinking of what it had done for her, wondered often if the other lives of the valley that winter could live on without carrying indelible coloring from grateful, remorseful emotions born there. She did not realize how transient emotions are in some people; and then she had grown to idealize him so greatly. She fancied herself surely one of many, while really she was one alone.

"Yes, lass—a woeful waste," repeated the old man; and her thoughts wandered back to their starting-place.

"No!" she answered with the sturdy certainty of faith. "The prodigality there was not wastefulness, and was not without a method—not a method of his own, but that something beyond us we call God or Fate. Lives he lived or died for may seem of mighty little consequence individually, but what *is*, is more than likely to be right, Davy MacDougall, even if we can't see it from our point of view;" and

then, after a little, she added, "he is not the first lion that has died to feed dogs—there was that man of Nazareth."

Davy MacDougall stopped, looking at her with fond, aged eyes that shone perplexedly from under his shaggy brows.

"You're a rare, strange lass, Rachel Hardy," he said at last, "an' long as I've known ye, I'm not ower certain that I know ye at all. The lad used to be a bit like that at times, but when I see ye last at the night, I'm ne'er right certain what I'll find ye in the mornin'."

"You'll never find me far from that, at any rate," and she motioned up the "Hill of the Witches," and on a sunny level a little above them Mowitza and Kalitan were waiting.

"Then, lass, ye'll ne'er tak' leave o' the Kootenai hills?"

"I think not. I would smother now in the life those people are going to," and she nodded after those departing guests who were going back to the world. Then her eyes turned from the mists of the valleys to the whispering peace of cedars that guard Scot's Mountain. "No, Davy, I'll never leave the hills."

KLOSHE KAH-KWA.

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MAN OF MARK. Hope.
MAROONED. Russell.
MARRIAGE AT SEA. Russell.
MARTIN HEWITT. Morrison.
MASTER OF BALLANTRAE. Stevenson.

MASTER OF THE MINE. Buchanan.
MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE. Hardy.
MEMOIRS OF A PHYSICIAN. Dumas.
MERZE. Ryan.
MICAH CLARKE. Doyle.
MICHAEL'S CRAG. Allen.
MIDDLEMARCH. Eliot.
MILL ON THE FLOSS. Eliot.
MINE OWN PEOPLE AND IN BLACK AND WHITE. Kipling.
MONASTERY, THE Scott.
MRS. ANNIE GREEN. Read.
MY LADY NICOTINE. Barrie.
NEWCOMES. Thackeray
NICHOLAS NICKLEBY. Dickens.
NORTH AGAINST SOUTH. Verne.
OLD MORTALITY. Scott.
ONE OF THE FORTY. Daudet.
ON THE HEIGHTS. Auerbach.
ORIGIN OF SPECIES. Darwin.
OUR MUTUAL FRIEND. Dickens.
PAGAN OF THE ALLEGHANIES. Ryan.
PATHFINDER. Cooper.
PAUL CLIFFORD. Lytton.
PELHAM. Lytton.
PERE GORIOT. Balzac.
PHANTOM RICKSHAW. Kipling.
PICKWICK PAPERS. Dickens.
PILGRIMS OF THE RHINE. Lytton.
PILGRIM'S PROGRESS. Bunyan.
PIONEERS. Cooper.
PIRATE. Scott.
PLAIN TALES FROM THE HILLS. Kipling.
PRAIRIE. Cooper.
PRETTY MICHAL. Jokai.
PRINCE OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID. Ingraham.
QUENTIN DURWARD. Scott.
RED GAUNTLET. Scott.
REPROACH OF ANNESLEY. Grey.
RETURN OF THE NATIVE. Hardy.
RIENZI. Lytton.
ROBINSON CRUSOE. Defoe.
ROB ROY. Scott.
ROMANCE OF TWO WORLDS. Corelli.
ROMOLA. Eliot.
ST. RONAN'S WELL. Scott.
SARCHEDON. Whyte-Melville.
SCARLET LETTER. Hawthorne.
SCOTT'S POEMS. Scott.
SCOTTISH CHIEFS. Porter.
SEA WOLVES. Pemberton.
SHADOW OF A CRIME. Caine.
SHE FELL IN LOVE WITH HER HUSBAND. Werner.
SIGN OF THE FOUR. Doyle.

SILENCE OF DEAN MAITLAND. Grey.
SKETCH BOOK. Irving.
SOLDIERS THREE. Kipling.
SON OF HAGAR. Caine.
SONG OF HIAWATHA. Longfellow.
SQUAW ELOUISE. Ryan.
STORY OF AN AFRICAN FARM. Schreiner.
STRANGE STORY. Lytton.
STRONGER THAN DEATH. Gautier.
STUDY IN SCARLET. Doyle.
STUDY OF GENIUS. Royse.
SURGEON'S DAUGHTER. Scott.
SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON. Wyss.
TALE OF TWO CITIES. Dickens.
TALES FROM SHAKESPEARE. Lamb.
TALISMAN. Scott.
THADDEUS OF WARSAW. Porter.
THELMA. Corelli.
THREE MEN IN A BOAT. Jerome.
TOILERS OF THE SEA. Hugo.
TOLD IN THE HILLS. Ryan.
TOM BROWN AT OXFORD. Hughes.
TOM BROWN'S SCHOOL DAYS. Hughes.
TREASURE ISLAND. Stevenson.
UNCLE TOM'S CABIN. Stowe.
UNDER THE DEODARS AND STORY OF THE GADSBYS. Kipling.
UNDER TWO FLAGS . Ouida.
UP TERRAPIN RIVER. Read.
VANITY FAIR. Thackeray.
VICAR OF WAKEFIELD. Goldsmith.
WAVERLY Scott.
WEE WILLIE WINKIE. Kipling.
WESTWARD HO. Kingsley.
WE TWO. Lyall.
WHAT'S BRED IN THE BONE. Allen.
WHITE COMPANY. Doyle.
WOODLANDERS. Hardy.
WOODSTOCK. Scott.
ZANONI. Lytton.